

Part 5 Warping the loom - Videos 20-26

Don't panic - one step at a time

Warping is not as hard as it looks and once you are confident about doing it, you really are a weaver and will not hesitate to begin a project. It is an important skill and a large part of the weaving task is actually the warping. If the warping is done easily, the weaving is easy and fast. If not, the weaving is not only slow, but tricky and far less fun. Stage one is to set up the loom.



Warping the looms at a Create With Fibre workshop.

Wastage

You will be warping by stranding the yarn between the loom and a warping peg, which is normally supplied with the loom (see picture). The length between the front of the loom and the warping peg, minus about 12 inches/30cm will be the length of the finished weaving. There will be about 12 inches/30cm of wastage at the front of the loom where the threads are tied onto the stick at the front of the loom, and also at the back, as it is not possible to weave right up to and beyond the heddle.

We are not worrying about how long the weaving will be at this stage though and are simply going to 'wind' a warp that is about 3 feet/90cm long. That is long enough to weave something yet short enough that it will still be easy to work with.

Warping method

This method is a special way of warping a rigid heddle loom. It is simpler and way faster than the traditional warping methods that are used with larger looms.

1. Mark the front of the loom with marker pen so that you remember which is the front and back of the loom.
2. Put the heddle into the back, resting position which is between 'up' and 'down'.
3. Attach the warping peg to a table with the clamp provided.
4. Put the loom on another table or on its stand if you have one, with the front of the loom towards the warping peg.
5. The distance between the two points depends on how long you want the warp to be. Measure the length you want and then add about another 12 inches/30cms.
6. Put the yarn you are using to warp up with behind the loom – i.e. at the end furthest from the peg – and on the floor. Remember it is best to use a smooth (i.e. non fancy) acrylic/wool mix yarn the first time you warp the loom. Do not use cotton, linen or other non-stretchy yarn the first few times you warp.
7. Tie the yarn to the back stick of the loom. This is the stick that is thinner and attached to the back roller by string or lengths of plastic.
8. The first time you warp the loom do not thread wider than 6 inches/15cm. Thread up a section in the centre of the heddle rather than to one side.
9. Use the flat plastic hook to pull a loop of yarn through the first slot of the heddle.
10. Pull this loop all the way through to the warping peg and drop it over the peg. It is important to pull on the loose end of the yarn, ie the one that is attached to the ball of yarn on the floor.
11. Avoid pulling the loops tight and always have some slack yarn unwound behind the heddle before you start to pull. If you do not do this the yarn will pop off the warping peg.

12. Go back to the ball/cone of yarn and pull a second loop over the back stick. Thread this through the heddle in a similar way and drop it over the peg.

13. Continue like this until you have the desired width. Note that you are ignoring the holes in the heddle and only threading the yarn through the slots at this stage.

14. If you run out of yarn, tie a new ball to the old one, next to the back stick or at the peg end, so that the knot does not have to go through the heddle. An over hand knot works best because it is non-slip but if you do not know how to do one of those just do any firm knot.



Winding a warp, showing how to keep the warp nice and loose loose rather than tight (above and right).



15. Tie a shoe lace or similar around the whole bundle of warp yarns near the peg, but leave a bit of room - don't tie it so it is tight around the peg.

16. Remove the warps from the peg and cut the end of the loops, leaving the tie in place as a safety measure.

17. Lay a pile of paper sheets (old magazines work well) under the heddle on the loom, ready to insert as you wind the warp.

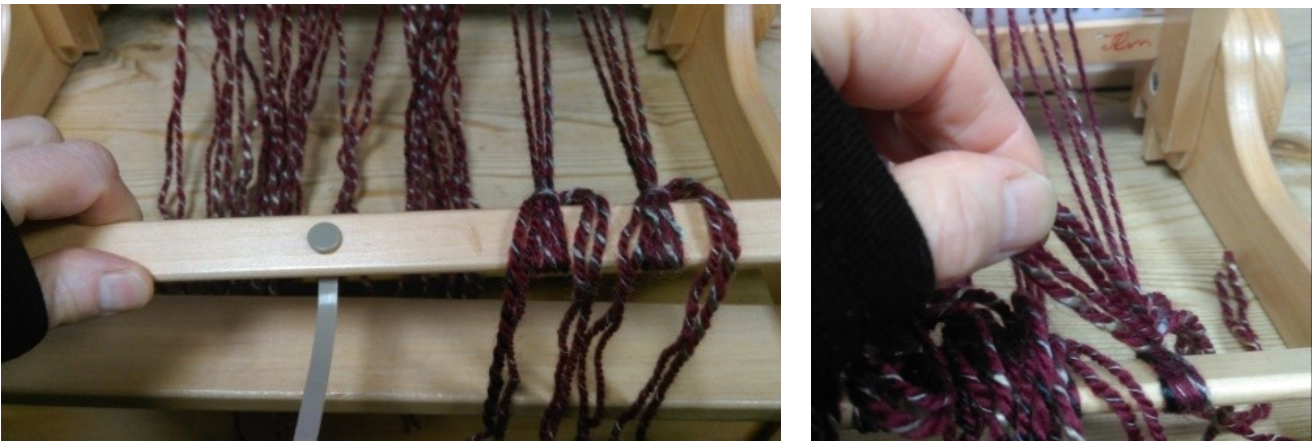
18. Get someone to help you if possible and wind the yarn onto the loom by turning the back cog, whilst holding the warp in a fist under tension and stretching it over the front beam. Make sure the locks on both front and back cogs are engaged.
19. If there are two of you, one will wind the warp on and the other will hold the warp under tension and insert paper in between the layers of warp threads.
20. If you are doing it on your own, hold the warp with one hand and wind with the other. You will have to stop winding every so often to insert a new piece of paper between the layers of warp threads.
21. Once the warp is wound on, there should be about 12 inches/30cm left at the front of the loom.
22. Make sure you do not pull the loom off the table by using too much tension.
23. Now sit down in front of the loom and untie the shoelace.
24. Using the smaller end of the threading hook/smaller hook, reach behind the heddle, and take one of the two warps out of each slot from the back. Thread it through the adjoining hole in the heddle. It does not matter whether you go from left to right or vice versa, but it helps to be methodical as you do not want to miss any holes out. Throwing the warps over the top of the heddle once they are threaded helps to keep track.



Warps shown thrown over the top of the heddle once threaded.

25. Tie the warps around the front stick in bundles of 4, using only a single knot. If there is an odd number of threads, do two lots of three at some point.

26. Now go back along the groups of threads and tension each group. Then tie a half bow on top of each of the single knots. Make sure the tension is as even as possible. This is why you are using a stretchy yarn, because the stretchiness makes it easier to get the tension even.



Tying the warp onto the front stick then completing the half bows.

The first time you warp the loom, it can seem confusing and not much fun. However, it soon becomes easier, faster and fun to do, which is why it is important to practise with narrow, short warps, do some weaving and then warp again.

See the first two pieces of weaving you do as samples and use them to play and learn. You will still end up with something lovely that can either be used as a mat or a wall hanging.

Weaving a header

1. With the heddle into either the 'up' or 'down' position, thread a strip of folded paper through the 'shed' – which is the space between the threads, through which you weave. This needs to be folded so that it is thick. It will cover any unevenness caused by the knots as you weave and then wind the weaving on to the front beam.

2. Move the heddle into the opposite position and thread a second piece of folded paper through the shed.

3. Change shed again and take a piece of thicker, waste yarn. Weave 3 rows, changing the shed each time but do not beat them down until the end, then beat all three down together. Leave the yarn sticking out in loops at the sides so that you can cut it and pull it out from the sides when the weaving is finished.

4. Repeat step 3 once more. The purpose of this woven 'header' is to even out the gaps between the warp threads.



Weaving a header (above) and a loom ready to weave (below).

