

# INKLE WEAVING

BY NAOMI BINSFELD



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## LOOM ASSEMBLY

Insert the bolt end of the tension peg (A) through the slot in the side of the inkle loom. Place a washer on the threaded shaft and screw on the black knob.

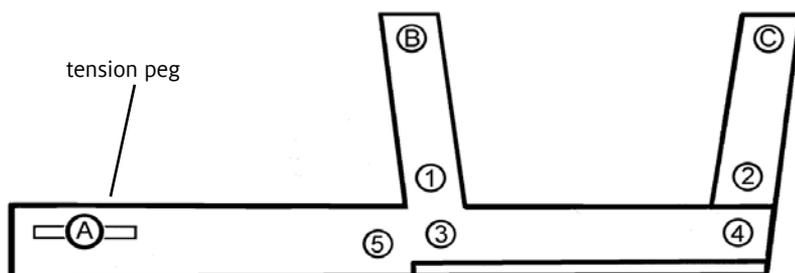


FIGURE 1 - INKLE LOOM

## WEAVING TERMS

*Heading:* a heavy weft, not part of the main weaving, worked at each end of the band and removed when the weaving is complete.

*Heddles:* string loops that are used to control the warp threads.

*Pattern Draft:* a graphic description of the placement of the different colors of warp yarns used for the warp pattern.

*Pick-up Stick:* a smooth stick with a pointed end, also called a “shed” stick.

*Shed:* the space through which the shuttle passes.

*Stick Shuttle:* a flat stick that carries the weft, notched at both ends.

A “belt” shuttle has one beveled edge which helps pack the weft tightly together.

*Warp:* (noun) the lengthwise threads that are stretched on the loom and lifted or lowered for weaving; (verb) the process of putting warp thread on the loom for weaving.

*Weft:* the crosswise threads that are woven through the warp yarns.

## WEAVING YARNS

The best yarns for weaving are smooth, strong and relatively inelastic. Perle cotton (also known as mercerized cotton) in size 3/2 or size 5/2, embroidery floss, cotton rug warp, linen or firmly twisted wools are all suitable.

with heddle: d d x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x d d (20 ends)  
 no heddle: d d x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x d d (19 ends)

heddles required = 20  
 total ends = 39  
 total dark ends (d) = 8  
 total light ends (x) = 31

FIGURE 2 - SAMPLE DRAFT

**INKLE WEAVING PATTERN DRAFT**

Before you begin to warp your loom, choose a weaving draft to follow. In these instructions we have used the draft shown in figure 2. There are additional drafts on the last page of these instructions.

The top row of the draft shows the warp threads that will be strung through heddles. The bottom row shows the warp threads which will not pass through heddles. Read the pattern starting with the top row at the left, as follows: warp the first thread in the top row, then the first thread in the bottom row. Next warp the second thread in the top row and the second thread in the bottom row. Follow the draft, alternating from the top to the bottom until the pattern is complete.

**MAKING THE HEDDLES**

You must make a heddle for each of the warp ends listed on the top row of the weaving draft. You will need 20 heddles for the sample pattern draft. Heddles are reusable and should be made of a sturdy cotton string such as cotton rug warp or seine twine. There are two types of heddles, “single” and “double,” either of which can be used on this loom.

The single heddle is made by tying the heddle string around pegs 1 and 5 (figure 1). When using this heddle you must place the heddles on the warp threads as you warp the loom (figure 3).

The double heddle is made by tying the string around pegs B, 1, and 5. This heddle can be attached during the warping process, or after part or all of the warp is on the loom (figure 4).

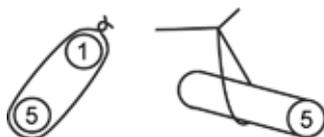


FIGURE 3 - SINGLE HEDDLE

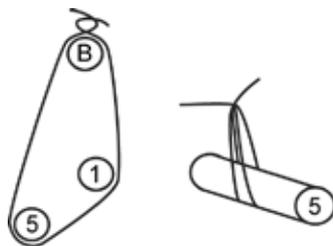


FIGURE 4 - DOUBLE HEDDLE

## WARPING THE LOOM

Place the loom on a table with the pegs facing you. Move the tension peg A to the middle of the slot (figure 6).

Warp using the **double heddles**:

1. Tie the end of the dark yarn around peg A with a slip knot (figure 5).
2. To wind the first warp thread, pass the warp thread over pegs B and C, and then down to 4 and back to peg A (figure 6).
3. Fold the double heddle over the first warp thread (working just in front of peg B), and loop both ends of the heddle onto peg 5 (figure 4).
4. The 2nd warp thread is wound without a heddle, and goes under peg B, over peg C and then around peg 4 and back to A (figure 6).

OR

Warp using the **single heddles**:

1. Thread all of the heddles you will need for your pattern onto each of the two warp yarns (4 heddles for the dark yarn, and 16 heddles for the light) before beginning to warp. Just slip the free end of the warp yarn through the heddles.
2. Tie the free end of the dark yarn to peg A with a slip knot (figure 5).
3. To wind the first warp thread, slip the first heddle onto peg 5 (figure 3) and then pass the warp thread over pegs B and C, and then down to peg 4 and back to peg A (figure 6).
4. The 2nd warp thread is wound without a heddle, and goes under peg B, over peg C, around peg 4 and back to A (figure 6).

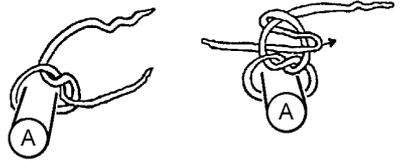


FIGURE 5 - SLIP KNOT

Repeat these four steps until you have finished with the dark color. (Wind a total of 4 dark warp threads, if you are following the sample pattern.)

Cut the dark warp thread approximately 2" beyond peg A and tie this end to the free end of the next color required by the draft (light, for the sample draft).

Check that the knotted ends go around the outside of peg A, and be careful not to wind either end all the way around peg A. Keep the tension even and continue to warp according to steps 1-4, above, tying each new color to the previous color.

When all of the warp strings have been wound onto the loom, untie the beginning slip knot and tie the first (dark) thread to the end of the last (dark) thread. Be sure the knotted threads pass around the outside of peg A. Tighten the tension of the entire warp by loosening peg A and moving it toward the front of the loom. Tighten peg A firmly in place.

## PREPARING THE WEFT

Inkle weaving is a "warp-faced" weave, which means you will see the

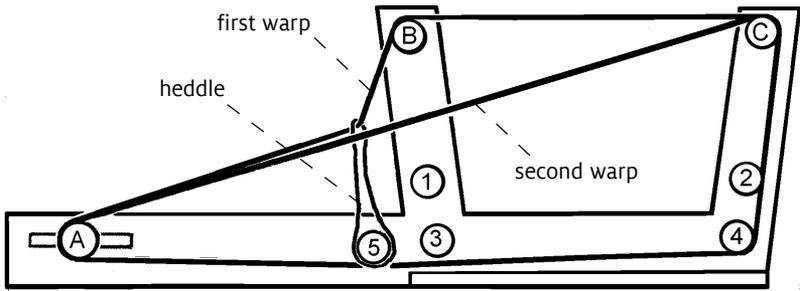


FIGURE 6 - WARPING THE LOOM

weft only at the edges of the woven band. If you use the same color for the weft that you used for the outer warp ends, the weft will run invisibly along the outside. If you use a contrasting color weft, it will show as small loops on the edge of the band. Use a yarn of the same size and type as the warp, or use a thicker yarn if you prefer a heavier woven band. You can double your warp yarn to create a thicker weft.

### WIND A SHUTTLE

Wind your weft yarn in a figure 8 onto a stick shuttle or a belt shuttle. A belt shuttle has one tapered edge which makes it easier to beat your weft into place. If you are using a belt shuttle, wind your weft yarn onto the fatter side of the belt shuttle, leaving the tapered edge free.

In addition to your weft yarn, you will need a 6" length of thick string or yarn, or a few small sticks (such as craft sticks, broomstraws, etc.) to weave a heading. You can wind this heading weft onto your shuttle on top of the regular weft.

You are now ready to weave!

### BEGINNING TO WEAVE

The inkle loom is capable of creating two sheds, or openings, between the warp ends. To weave you will pass the weft yarn through first one and then the other of these two sheds. You will first make a heading to practice making the sheds and to prepare your warp for weaving the actual inkle band.

### MAKING A HEADING

Make the first shed by placing your hand behind the heddles and pushing down firmly on the warp ends which are not through the heddles (these are the "moving threads") until an opening is created below the warp ends which are in the heddles (the "stationary threads") and in front of the heddles. Insert one end of the thick thread or one stick. Tighten the weaving by forcing the weft yarn or stick as far forward as possible. Then form the second shed by pushing up on the moving warp threads until a space is created above the stationary warp ends and in front of the heddles. Insert the thick thread or a second stick. Work two more rows of heading in this manner. Cut the heading yarn, leaving a short tail.

## **WEAVING THE INKLE BAND**

To weave the first row, push down the moving threads to create your first shed, and pass the shuttle with your main weft yarn halfway through so that it extends on both sides of the warp. (You can let go of the shed because the shuttle is keeping the shed open.) Use both hands to pull the shuttle firmly toward you. Now, pull the shuttle the rest of the way through the warp, leaving a short (2") tail of weft on the starting side.

To weave the second row, pull up the moving threads. Tuck the tail of weft from the first row into the shed, then insert the shuttle halfway through the warp and use both hands to pull firmly toward you. This will “beat” in the previous row and the tail of weft and create a neat opening for the current row. Bring your shuttle through and pull the weft firmly to the edge of the inkle band. The warp ends should be pulled closely together so as to cover the weft. The weft should turn from one row to the next without loops.

Continue to weave in this manner, alternating the two sheds, beating with the shuttle, and passing the weft through the shed.

## **ADVANCING THE WARP**

After a few inches of weaving you will run out of space to weave. Now you are ready to advance the warp. Loosen the tension peg and firmly grasp the warp in two places. Pull the woven band toward you. Be careful to move all the threads the same distance in order to avoid a shift in the warp. Re-adjust the tension peg and resume weaving.

## **JOINING A NEW WEFT**

To make a seamless join when you run out of weft on the shuttle, use the “clasped weft” technique. Make a loop with the end of the new weft. Lay in the next shed with the loop sticking out the same side as the short weft from the previous shed. Make sure that both ends of the loop extend beyond the band on the other side. Thread the old weft through the loop so that you have formed interlocking loops. Pull on both ends until the join is hidden inside the band. Resume weaving with the new weft. Trim off the excess ends when the band is finished.

## **FINISHING THE INKLE BAND**

When the band is as long as you want or when there is no more room to advance the warp, use a small piece of warp thread to create an invisible finish, as follows: weave a loop of the extra warp thread into the next to last shed, so that the two ends of the loop are on the same side as the shuttle, and the loop is on the opposite side from the shuttle. Weave the last shed, and cut the end leaving a 6" tail. Then weave a few extra rows of heading to hold the last few rows of your band in place. Remove the band from the loom by cutting through the warp in the center of the unwoven section. Tuck the 6" tail of weft yarn into the loop you created in the next-to-last shed, pull the tail into the belt and trim the loose ends. To secure the tail ends of your warp, you can sew firmly across the last row of weft, by hand or by machine, and then remove the heading. Another finishing method is to remove the heading yarns at

either end and then tie, braid, or twist groups of warp together.

### WEAVING VARIATIONS

Longer bands can be made by winding your warp back and forth on the pegs between 1 and 4. For example the longest warp would wind around C, 1, 2, 3, and 4. The chart below lists the possible warp paths and their lengths. Note: all threads in a warp must follow the same path up to and around peg C, and return from peg 4 to peg A.

The width of a band is determined by the number and size of the warp threads used. A 1" band would require approximately 50 warp threads in the yarns recommended in these instructions. A finished width of 4 inches is the maximum which can be woven on this loom.

### WARP LENGTH

You can choose the length of your warp by selecting one of the warp paths described in the table below. Start at Peg A and proceed to Peg C, then from peg C go to the next peg on the list for the warp length you want. For example, the warp shown in figure 6 follows the path for a 5-yard warp (A-C-4-5). ■

| <b>Peg</b>    | <b>Warp Length</b> |
|---------------|--------------------|
| A-C-1-2-3-4-5 | 8½ feet            |
| A-C-1-4-5     | 6½ feet            |
| A-C-4-5       | 5 feet             |

### BLUE STRIPES

thru heddle: w w b b w w w w w b b w w (14 ends)  
not thru heddle: w w b b w w w w w b b w w (13 ends)  
heddles required = 14  
total blue ends (b) = 8  
total white ends (w) = 19

### CHECKS

thru needle: r r r r r p p p r r r p p p r r r p p p r r (22 ends)  
not thru heddle: r r p p p r r r p p p r r r p p p r r r r r (22 ends)  
heddles required = 22  
total red ends (r) = 26  
total purple ends (p) = 18

### CHAINS

thru heddle: w b x b w b b w b x b w (12 ends)  
not thru heddle: w b b w b x b w b b w (11 ends)  
heddles required = 12  
total blue ends (b) = 12  
total white ends (w) = 8  
total yellow ends (x) = 3

### EGYPTIAN KEY

thru heddle: m m g g g g g b b b m m (13 ends)  
not thru heddle: m m g g g b b b b b m m (13 ends)  
heddles required = 13  
total blue ends (b) = 9  
total maroon ends (m) = 8  
total green ends (g) = 9

### FURTHER READING

*Byways in Handweaving*, by Mary Atwater  
*Inkle Weaving*, by Helene Bress  
*Inkle*, by Evelyn Neher  
*Weaving Inkle Bands*, by Harriet Tidball