

XIII WHAT A WEAVER SHOULD KNOW

The following will save you a lot of headaches and hours of time, as there are many "do's" and "don'ts" of information you need.

Setting-up the loom

This is done in a number of separate processes, each easy in itself, but it requires care and accuracy in its performance. If it seems complicated at first, it is only because there are so many ways to set up a loom or "dressing" a loom.

Check the tension of the warp and the height of the harnesses,
for counter-balanced looms, see on page 14
for jack-type looms, see on page 20

With regard to a folding loom, be sure that the rear of the loom is completely open in order that the distance between the harnesses and the slabstock will be at its maximum to give a good shed. It is an error to try to save space by not opening the loom completely.

When selecting a permanent place for the loom, you must consider: lighting, heating, accessibility.



Fig. 470

A shelf on top of the loom and a holds-all close to the loom are very handy.

The bench

When we sit down at the loom, the elbows at rest should be at the same level as the warp, i.e. the same level as the breast piece. The feet should reach the treadles comfortably. The necessary tools such as shuttles, bobbins, scissors, tape, etc. should be reached easily.

Light

The daylight should come from one side, not from the front or back. The best source of artificial light is an adjustable lamp attached to the loom frame or on a separate stand. Adjust it so that only the part of the loom between the breast piece and the harness is illuminated. Avoid strong light for threading. Direct light from a naked bulb or tube should never reach the eyes of the weaver.

Heating

No radiator, hot-air register, etc. should be anywhere near the loom. It dries the yarn on the warp and damages it. The yarn needs a certain degree of humidity to keep its stretching ability and flexibility. A too dry yarn will unravel and will break easily.

This can also cause sticking in the warp. On a jack-type loom, the harnesses which are not tied, may rise half way when a treadle is pressed to raise other harnesses.

To prevent or correct this problem, use a humidifier to keep the room normally humid or cover warp beam and yarn at the rear of the harnesses with a damp towel.

Another way to correct this problem is to use «Clerco» (Leclerc Cat. No. 61476000). This is an oil, specially made for this purpose, which is applied with a brush on the warp, and does not damage nor soil the warp but prevents it from unraveling.

Do not store the loom in a damp place, reed and heddles may rust, and the wood may warp.

Accessibility

The loom should be accessible from all sides. There should be enough room in the back to put a bench behind it (to sit on when necessary) and as much space as possible in front. Needless to say, the floor must be level or corrected by small rubber pads under the posts.

To produce a good piece of material, the weaver should be sitting comfortably with the stool at the right height to suit the individual.

Cutting off material

If you have to cut your woven material before the end of the warp, you must weave about 1 meter (1 yard) more than the needed piece to be cut. So, you roll this end piece together with the apron. It will hold your warp without having to retie.

CORRECTING ERRORS

Improper slewing

Before starting to weave, check the top of your tabby sheds closely. If you see a place where there is a space wider than the rest, you have skipped a dent. If you see a place with a heavier spot on the warp, you have probably crowded the warp ends there. Crowded or skipped dents will make streaks in your material. There is nothing to do but take out the heading, the lacing cord, and the knots and remove the warp from the reed to the nearest selvedge and to re-sley it. Skipped dents are only permissible for certain types of fabric and then in order.

Crossed-over warp ends

A warp end which does not rise or fall as the treadles are used but remains in the center of the shed in front of the reed has been crossed from the heddle over to the wrong dent. There are two warp ends involved, in fact one crossed over the other. Break them off at the knot, add on a short length of warp to each one, put them through their correct dents, and then tie them around the lacing cord at the knot in any way, just so that the tension is the same as the others.

Misthreading of the draft

Mistakes in threading are more unfortunate but should not be too serious since you have checked your threading carefully as you went along. Sometimes, however, a warp end which should be on harness 3 for instance, is found to be on harness 2. That is two warp ends side by side rise and fall together in the shed when plain weave is treadled, so that the weaving is imperfect.

To repair this, take the warp end out of the wrong harness having first cut it at the knot. Then with a strong cotton or linen or other long thread more than twice as long as your heddles, tie a string heddle on the correct harness, or add a snap-on repair heddle which is made to be placed in any space on the harness. Re-thread the warp end through this repair heddle, re-sley it in the reed, tie on a short bit of warp yarn to make it long enough, and anchor it by winding the thread in a figure eight around a pin.

To tie a string heddle, first make what is called a doup by centering a piece of heddle cord under the bar of the harness where the string heddle is to be tied. Tie a square knot with the two ends so that the knot comes in line with the lower part of all the eyes of the other heddles. Tie another square knot above this one on a level with the top of all the eyes of the heddles, thus making an eye in the string heddle. Then tie ends on top of the heddle bar at the upper part.

Omission of threading

Suppose that you find that you have completely left out one thread of the draft. This causes a flat in your tabby. On a spool or on one of the bobbins which fits into your shuttle, wind on sufficient thread and use this to take the place of the warp end which was omitted. Put in a repair heddle or use a string heddle on the

correct harness. Now you will have to re-sley the warp through the reed to the nearest selvedge to accommodate this extra warp end which is anchored in front with a pin. (Fig. 471)

In addition, you will need to add weights (metal washers or anything that gives the correct weight will do) to the bobbin hanging down over the slabstock until you have it at the same tension as the others. This can be ascertained once you begin to weave, if the warp end looks puckered in the cloth, it is not weighted enough to be tightly drawn and it needs more weight. Weighted warp ends hanging down behind the slabstock may look untidy, but they work and that is the main thing.

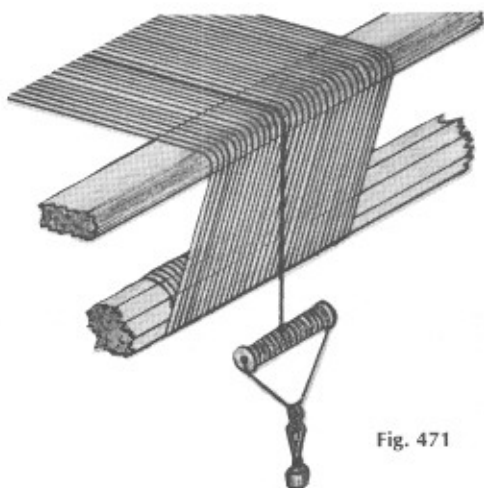


Fig. 471

Broken warp ends

Warp ends do break now and then. Measure off a length of warp long enough to reach from the slabstock to the breast beam, with a little extra for tying, take the new end through the eye of the heddle, through the reed, anchor with a pin in a figure eight, pull the broken end back out of the reed and heddle eye, weave an inch or so, take yarn off the pin and darn the new end in, clip ends. Doing this on the loom saves a great deal of time later when your web comes off the loom.

Never leave a pin in the web and wind it on the cloth beam as it may ruin a fine piece of weaving. Naturally the other ends of your new warp end will hang over the edge of the back beam, and be weighted as discussed before. The other ends on the warp beam will be brought forward when it is long enough and handles as a new end.

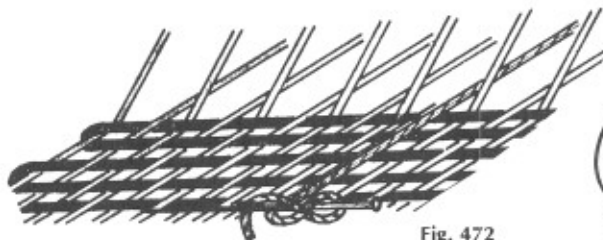


Fig. 472

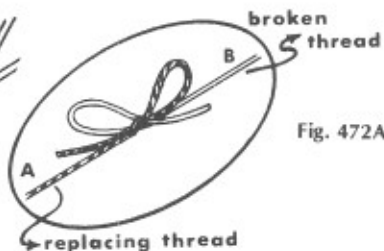


Fig. 472A

GOOD SELVEDGES

Avoiding draw-in

To prevent the material you are weaving from narrowing or drawing in at the selvedges, the weft should be placed in the shed at an angle and left loose in the shed just before beating it. If this is not done, the strain of drawing in becomes so great that the selvedge weft in the shed is crimped by the interweaving which takes place between warp and weft and which shortens the latter, causing the material to become narrower than the width of the warp in the reed. No amount of fussing or pulling at the selvedges will cause them to become wider once they are drawn in, so form the habit of placing the weft in the shed at an angle and do not pull on the weft with the hand that holds the shuttle. Some draw-in is bound to occur, but strive to keep it down to a minimum.

The beater must be grasped in the center because if not, your rows of weft will not lie parallel to the breast beam but will climb uphill at one side or the other.

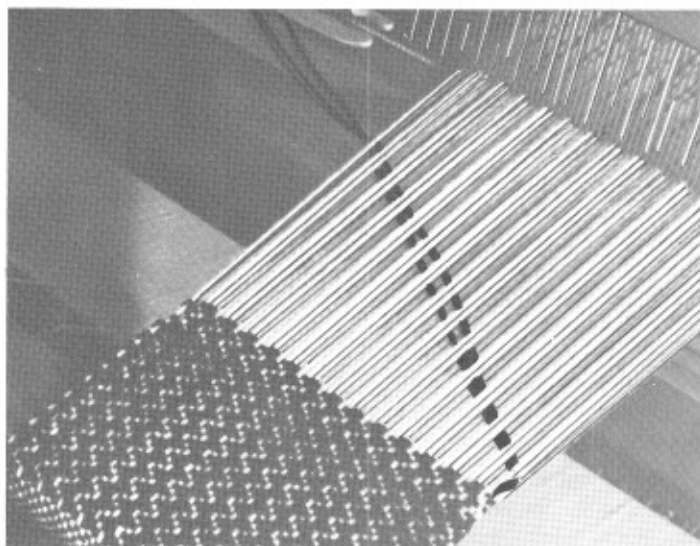


Fig. 473

Selvedges are most important when you are entering a piece of weaving in a competition. They should also be neat for articles such as stoles, scarves, ponchos, place mats, napkins, etc.

In mixed wefts, often used in place mats, the not so perfect selvedge is not too noticeable.

In yardage for clothing or drapes, they should be cut off, as they are set closer and will shrink at a different tension.

It is with practice that you will improve the selvedge. At first it will be uneven, full of loops, too tight, but with good care it will improve gradually.

What went wrong?

Tabby weaving is the test of a good weaver and should never be given to a beginner. It is really the test of a master in hand weaving. One has to watch for streaks, which will show that it was not beaten evenly, or the tension at the dog and ratchet so that it feels the same every time you move the warp forward. If there are loops left by the weft at the selvedge (Fig. 474), you are not pulling enough on the weft, or perhaps you have placed the shot in the shed at too much of an angle.

If you are drawing in too much, and cutting your edged ends it is wiser to waste any length or warp by beaming forward, starting again, and making sure you are laying your weft in on the angle.

Should your weft persist in running uphill at the selvages, you may have tied the outside bouts of your warp too loosely to the apron stick in front. Should they turn down, then the outside ends may have been tied too tightly to the front apron stick.

The poor selvedge



Fig. 474

The perfect selvedge



Fig. 475

Take notes

When you take up weaving, you never realize how far you will go in this craft, and when you do it, it is too late to recapture memories. But better late than never.

JOINING THE NEW WEFT

When the weft in the shuttle runs out, never tie on the new end to the old. Simply keep the shed open in which you were weaving. Insert the shuttle with its fresh bobbin through the shed in the same direction in which you were going. Then allow the end of the weft coming from your shuttle to overlap the old end in the shed for a short distance. One to two cm. (1/4" to 1/2") is plenty for most wefts, unless the warp ends are sleyed far apart. Bring the two ends up through the warp on top of the shed and let them stick up there. Continue to weave for 3 cm. (1 inch) or so. Then cut the ends off close to the surface of the weaving. They will hold. This should be done near either one of the edges even at the cost of a few cm. of weft. The reason being that when articles are judged, a shadow caused by double threads will cost you points. It cannot be seen at the edge for reasons stated before.

Very heavy wefts should be frayed out at the ends so that where they overlap at the joint they are not too bulky. When starting to weave with a heavy rug filler for instance, separate the end coming into its separate strands for about 10 cm. (4 in.), eliminate one of these strands by pulling it until it frays off. When the remaining strands are run back into the shed, the resulting overlapping should not be too noticeable. Never leave all these ends dangling in your weaving. Clip them off.

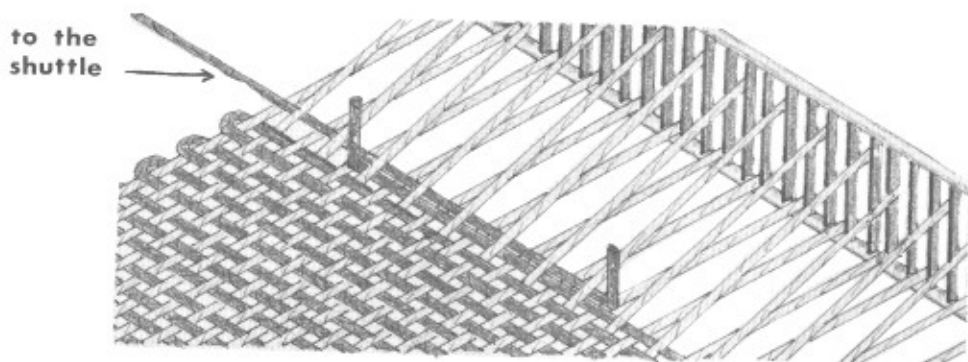


Fig. 476

Rules of the day

When you leave your weaving for the day, it is a good habit to ease the tension on your warp just a little. Warp ends can snap in a change of temperature, cottons tighten up considerably and it has been known for several warp ends to snap during the night.

It goes without saying that you insist that nothing be placed on the warp of your loom. People are usually drawn to that nice even spread of threads to lay books, coats, hats, etc. A warp bagging and sagging in spots is very bad indeed, and in some cases may need re-beaming. Cover your loom for the night or when not in use with plastic or other material.