



Weaving is the art of interlacing two sets of threads, the vertical warp and horizontal weft, at right angles to each other. At its most basic, the weft yarn travels over one warp thread, then under the next, over, under and so on.

Weaving often seems an inaccessible craft, due to the cost of buying a loom and the technical complexity of loom preparation. However, a basic woven fabric can be made using frames, boxes, hardback books, table legs, fence posts – anything where warp threads can be wrapped and held taut for the weft yarn to travel through. For this project this principle has been illustrated on a piece of driftwood. The fabric could be left in situ to make a pleasing artwork ready to hang on a wall or prop of a mantelpiece. If desired, it could also be cut off the driftwood and used as a decorative patch on, e.g. a garment, accessory or cushion.

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Material and equipment needed:



- Driftwood - preferably something flat and smooth
- Scissors
- Large plastic or metal tapestry needle
- Wooden 'kebab' skewer – you can buy these cheaply in supermarkets
- Pliers or similar tool to cut skewer
- A variety of yarns
- Masking tape
- Optional extra – a piece of cork or felt cut to size to cover the back of the driftwood if desired.

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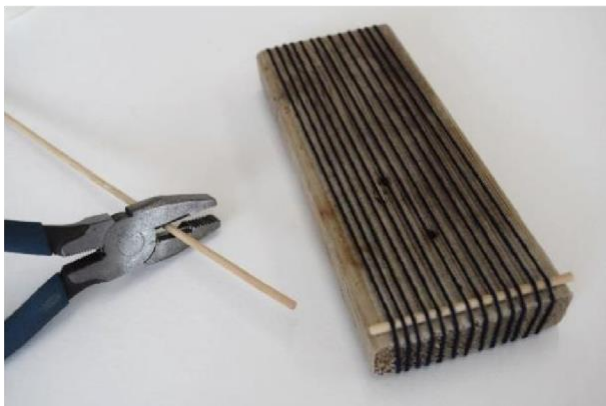
The process



1. Select a strong, smooth and uniform yarn as your warp thread. Here I have used a 3ply cotton. Attach the end of your warp yarn with some masking tape to the reverse of the driftwood.



2. Wrap the warp yarn tautly around the driftwood. Apply even tension to the yarn as you wrap and leave an equal sized gap between each warp yarn. The size of the gap is up to you, but I'd suggest around 2-3mm. Once complete, cut the thread and tape into place.



3. Now turn the driftwood back over to the 'right side'. Using the cutting part of a pair of pliers, cut 2 lengths of wooden skewer, a little wider than the width of the warp. Then, slip these under the warp threads and slide one to the bottom of the warp and the other to the top of the warp. This raises the warp threads from the wood thus making it easier to weave into.



4. Thread your needle with your weft yarn. Carefully place your needle over the first warp thread, then under the next, over, under across the full width. In this example I am going from right to left. Pull the needle and yarn through, leaving a 'tail' of yarn at least 8cm long. Push the woven yarn down with your fingers or some like to use a fork or wide toothed comb. You can then weave your second weft row, going from left to right 'over, under, over, under' but in the alternate sequence to the first row.

Take care to create a neat selvedge – the woven edges of a fabric along its length. Do not pull the weft thread too tight, or it will pull in your selvedge's and create a distorted fabric. You also don't want loops of weft yarn on the selvedge either, so place the yarn carefully and alter its positioning as necessary.



5. Once you have woven your first stripe, you might want to either leave the yarn 'tails' sticking out, or darn them in. In this picture I'm darning in the last tail. The needle is following the path of the second to last row of weaving, going under, over, under, over 4 warp threads. Then the needle travels behind the rest of the fabric and you carefully pull it until it leaves behind the tail which you can then snip away.

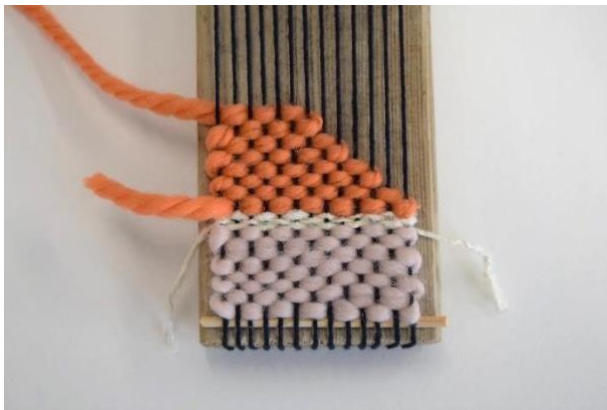


6. You can then do the same with the first tail from the first row. This time we follow the journey of the second row of weaving, under and over 4 warp threads with the needle, and then take it to the back of the fabric and carefully pulling the tail through to the back of the fabric.

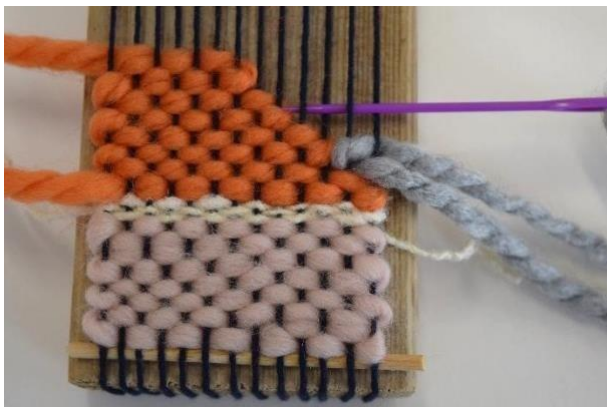


7. You can then carefully snip away the tail, and you are left with perfectly neat, fully woven selvedge's.

8. Continue weaving, alternating between weft yarns to create colourful, textural stripes in whatever arrangement you desire. You can weave as openly or as densely as you wish.

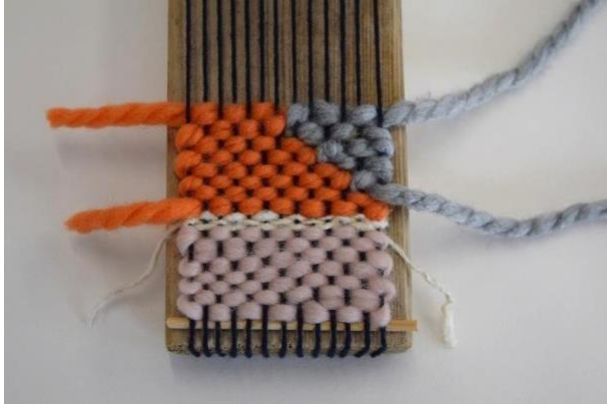


9. To weave a diagonal line as pictured, you can see that on the 3rd and 4th rows of orange weft, I've not woven the 2 warp thread on the right hand side. Then for the 5th and 6th rows I've not woven the 4 warp threads on the right and so on. You can follow your intuition and weave a shape as desired.

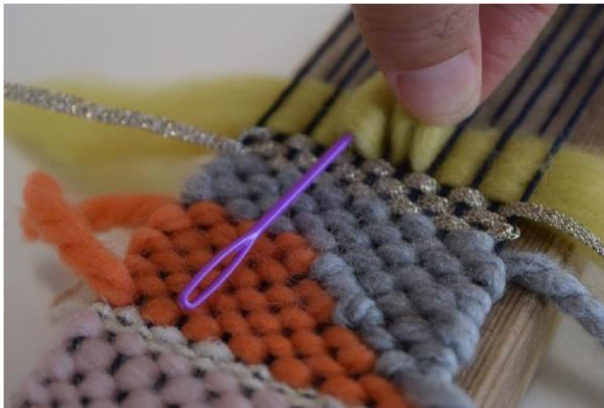


10. Then, using a yarn of contrasting colour but same thickness, you can infill weave. To begin, I weave two rows just on the right hand side 2 warp threads. Then on the third row you can see I'm placing the needle to weave the edge four warp threads.

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11. Continue until the space has been completely infilled.



12. Another technique you might want to use to add more surface texture is 'bobbling'. Here, I have woven a single row of wool fleece roving. Starting in the middle, I've used my needle to pull a loop or 'bobble' of fleece upwards out of the base weave. Then, holding on to the first loop to keep it in place, I then pull up the next loop alongside and repeat across the width.



13. Once you have finished your weaving, you might want to hide the warp threads on the back of the driftwood. In this example I have cut a piece of thin cork sheet to size and glued it to the reverse. You could also use a piece of felt or a similar non-fraying material.

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14. Once completed, you can either darn in all your tails, or leave some sticking out as I have done here, as I quite like the contrast between the neat weaving and lively edges! The artwork is now ready to prop on a mantelpiece or hang on a wall.

Further ideas and variations

Weave in strips of paper, dried grasses, feathers or other found materials.

Incorporate weft knots, loops and tufts of yarns into the woven fabric.

Explore colour, proportion, and texture to emulate a favourite landscape.