

Minimal Weaving Tutorial

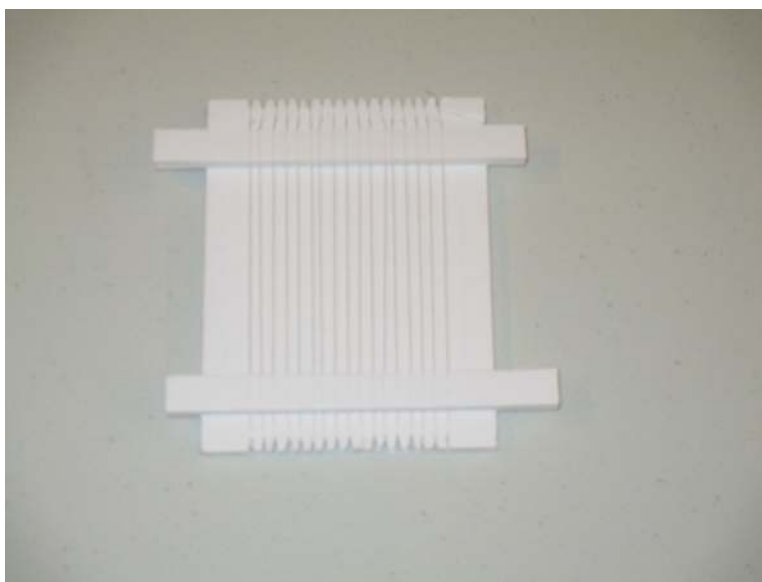
Written by Christopher Thomas – August 2, 2020.

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This document describes one of the simplest ways to do weaving. **This is not the best, or the easiest way** – it's one of the *simplest* ways.

This uses a variant of a frame loom, with yarn drawn through using a tapestry needle rather than a shuttle.

To start with, you need a frame to use as a weaving loom. This can be as simple as a board with notches in it. A frame that's open inside can be used as-is; a frame that's not open (like the one in the photo) should have shims at the top and bottom to raise the warp threads up so that you can easily work a needle through them.



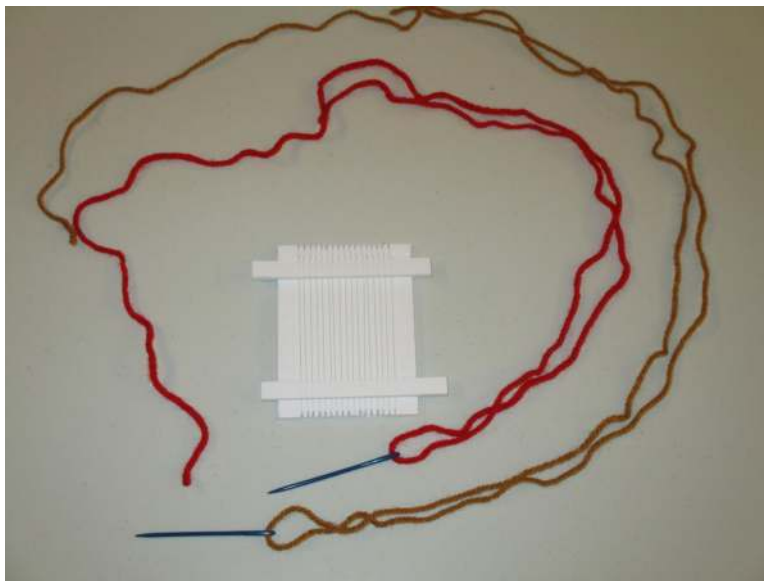
The spacing between the notches depends on the size of the yarn you're using for the weft. Most yarn has recommended knitting needle sizes on it; notch spacing should be about half that size (alternatively, half the size of the stitches in the knitting gauge square description). This yarn called for 5.5 mm knitting needles, and had a gauge square that had 4 stitches per inch (16 stitches for a 4 inch square); I used $\frac{1}{8}$ " spacing for the notches (about 3 mm). If you have a frame loom with pre-made notches, pick yarn with a recommended needle size about two notches wide.



Set up the frame with warp threads per the first picture. These wrap around the back, to give you enough extra length to tie them off when finishing the piece. I used ordinary sewing thread; you can get heavier thread if you want it to be a bit stronger. The heavier the thread, the more visible the warp will be in the final piece, so this is a trade-off.

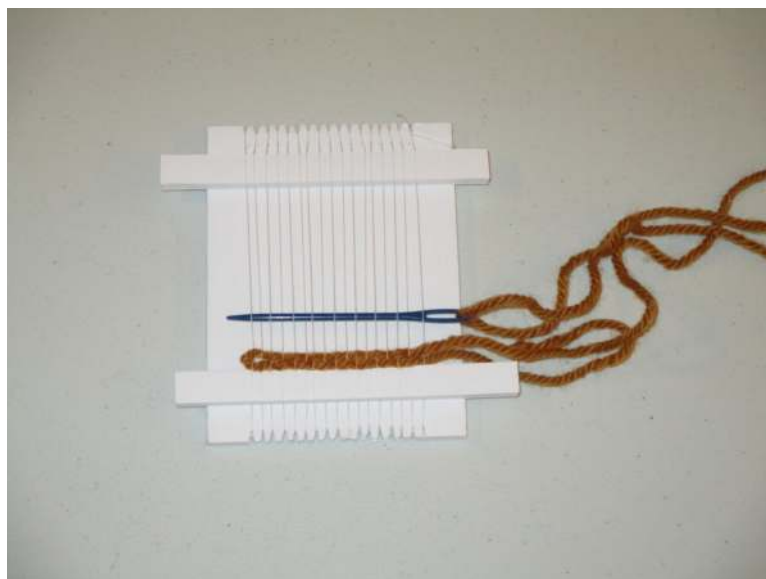
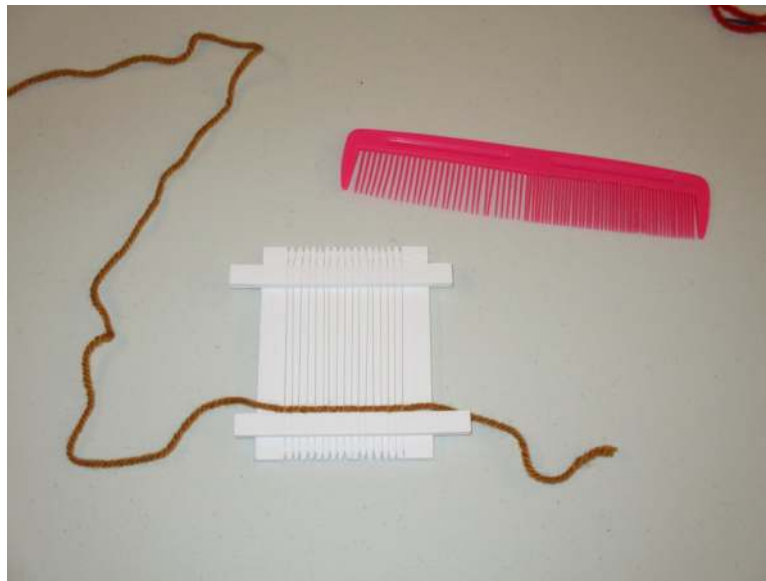
Prepare the weft yarn. I'm using tapestry needles to do the weaving, which means there's a limit to how much yarn I can put on the needle before it becomes impractical to use. Only put on as much as you can draw through easily; you can always start a new piece of yarn at the edge of the piece.

I'm going to be making stripes with two colours, so I've prepared two needles.

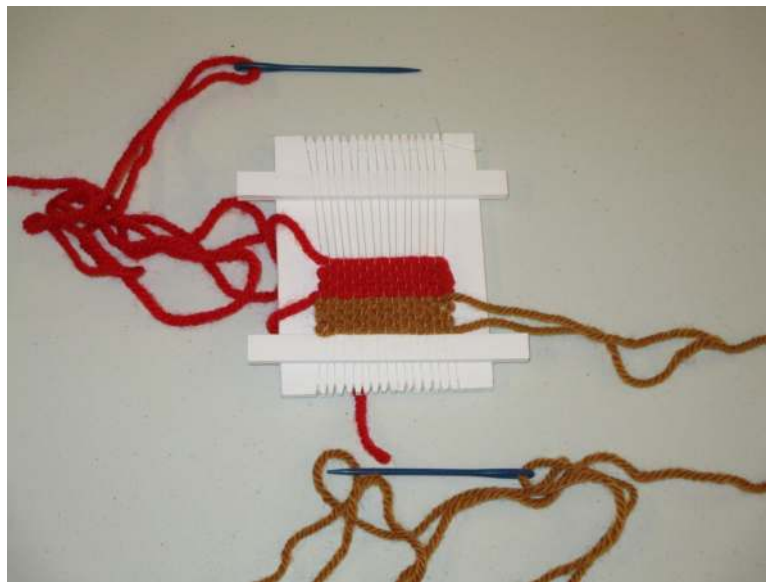
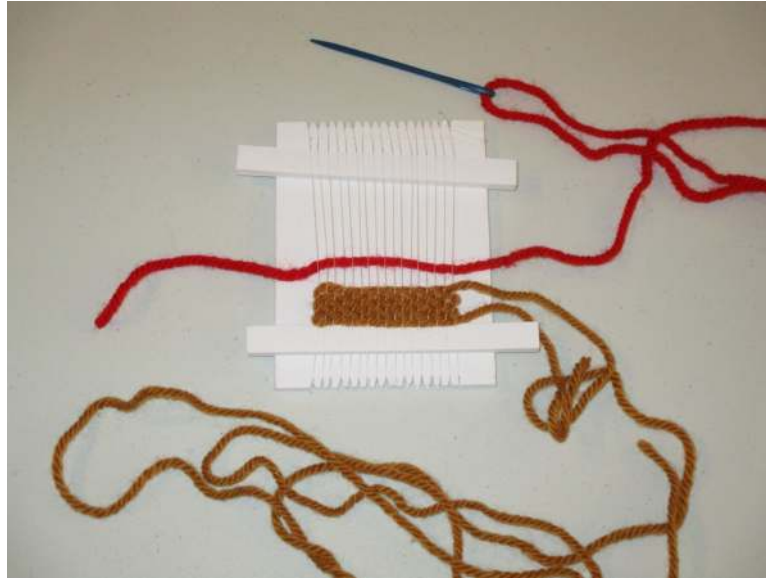


Weave the needle over and under the warp threads, as shown in the next two pictures. For the first pass, leave a tail a bit longer than your finger so that you can weave that end in later. For following passes, make sure that when you re-enter the piece, you're going over and under the opposite warp threads that you did on the previous pass (you'll get a "brick wall" pattern).

After each pass, use a (clean) comb to pack down the row you just made against the previous rows. You can pull the thread you're working on to make sure it's snug, but don't pull too hard (this will pull in the warp lines and give you an hourglass-shaped piece).

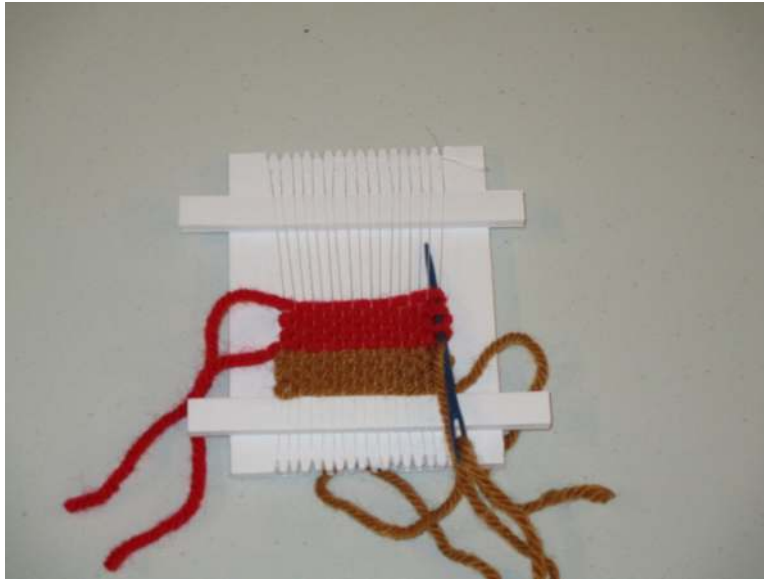


When you finish using a colour, but plan to use that colour again, set the needle aside but leave the yarn intact. To start the new colour, weave the new yarn in with its own needle. Starting from the opposite side the previous row ended on helps keep the woven ends balanced, but isn't critical. Just make sure that you're going over and under the opposite warp threads you did in the previous pass (keeping the "brick wall" pattern).

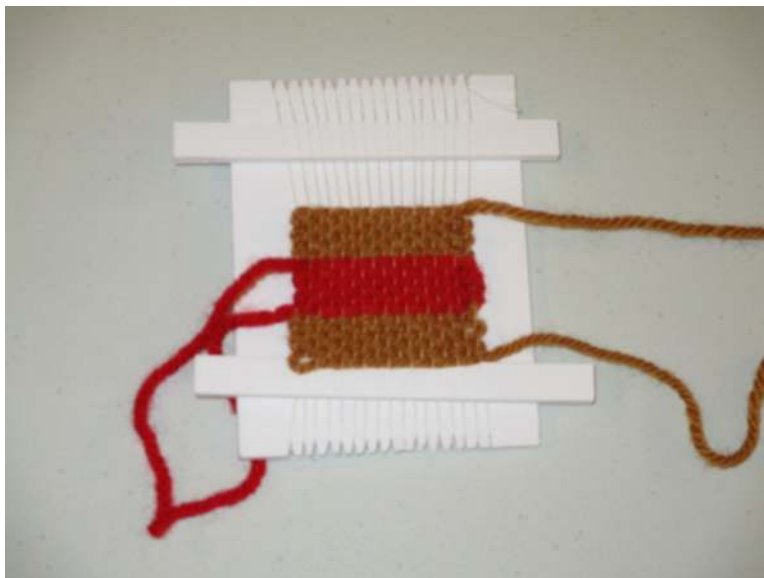


If you don't plan to use a colour again, you can cut that yarn, making sure to leave another tail a bit longer than your finger (just as with starting yarn). If you're picking up a colour that you set aside earlier, use the needle to feed it up the side of the piece along a warp line.

This will be visible at the edge of the piece. If that's not acceptable, cut the yarn and restart it as if it was a new colour.

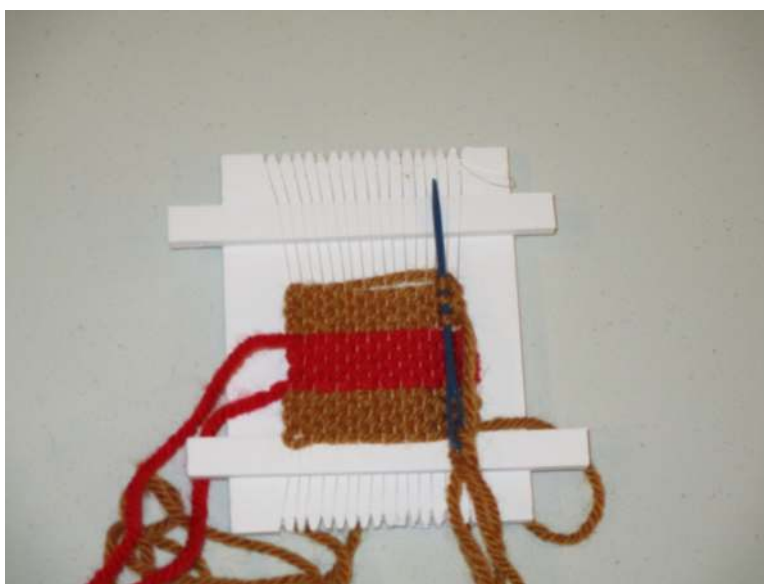
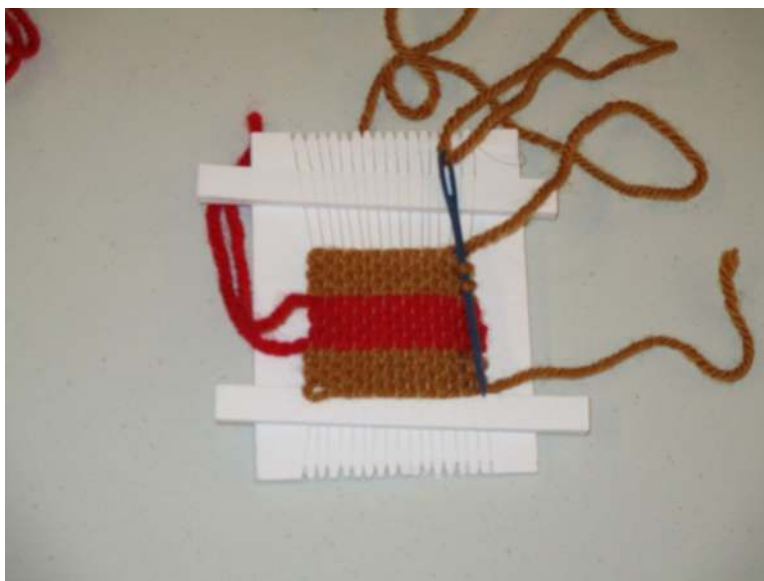


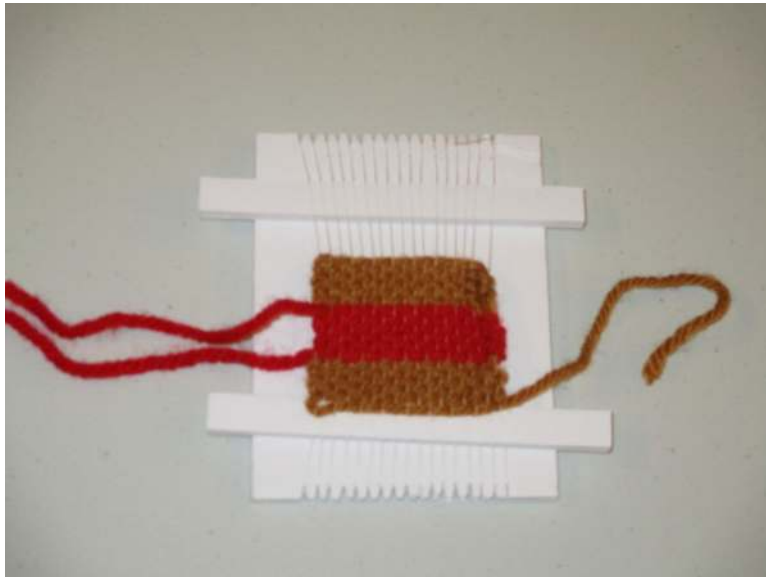
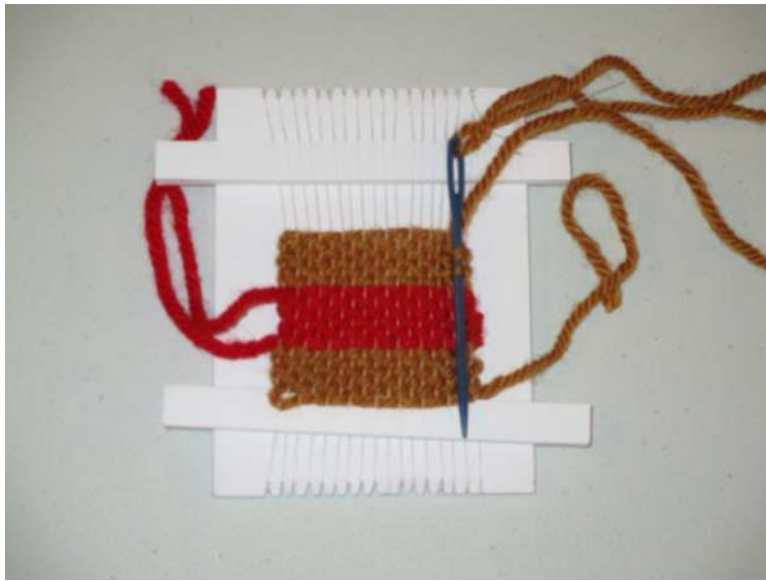
Once you've finished, all of your starting and ending threads should have tails longer than your finger.

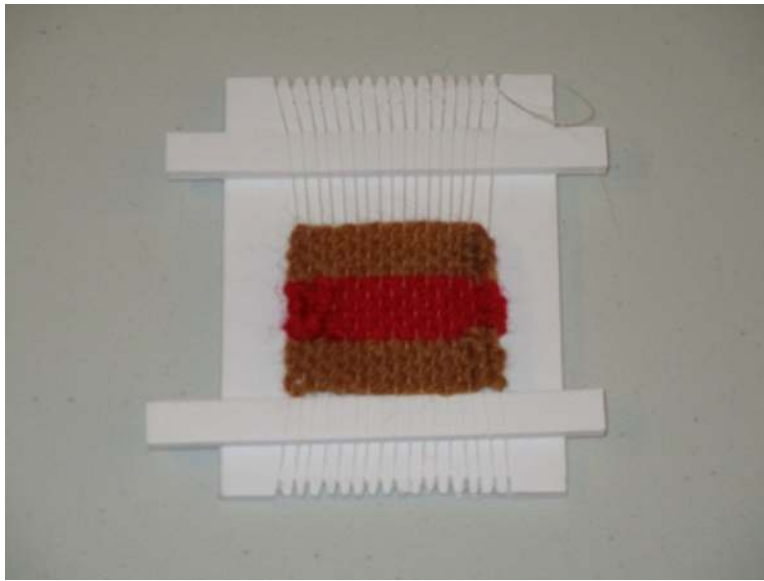


To secure the yarn tails, you “weave them in”. To do this, run the tail down one warp line with the tapestry needle, up a *different* warp line, and then down the original one again. Trim the end of the yarn, leaving a little bit of extra length (the width of your smallest fingernail is about right).

If you have an open-frame loom, weave them in on whichever side is the *back* of the piece. If you have a loom that’s not open, like the one in the picture, whatever side is facing you is going to be the back.



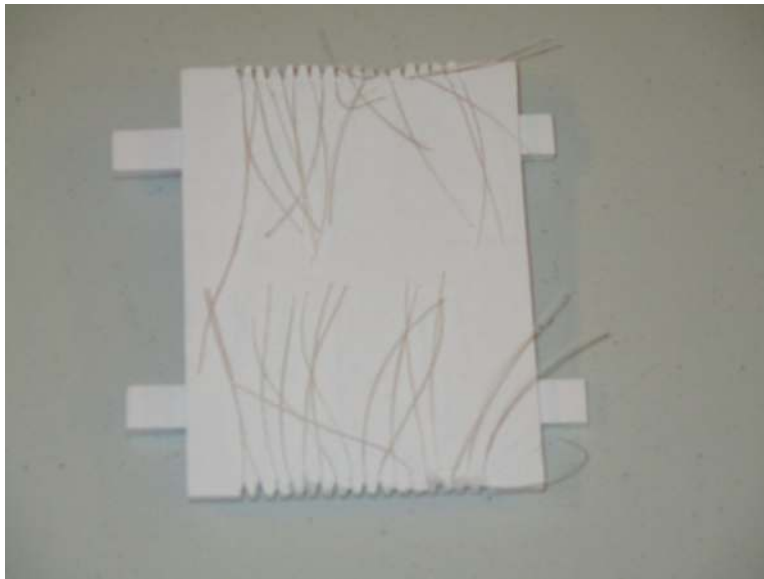




The next step is to tie together pairs of warp lines. To do this, first flip the loom over, and cut the warp lines.

NOTE – You might want to do this a few at a time (cutting and then tying), especially for a wider piece. It's hard to keep track of all of them trying to do them all at once.



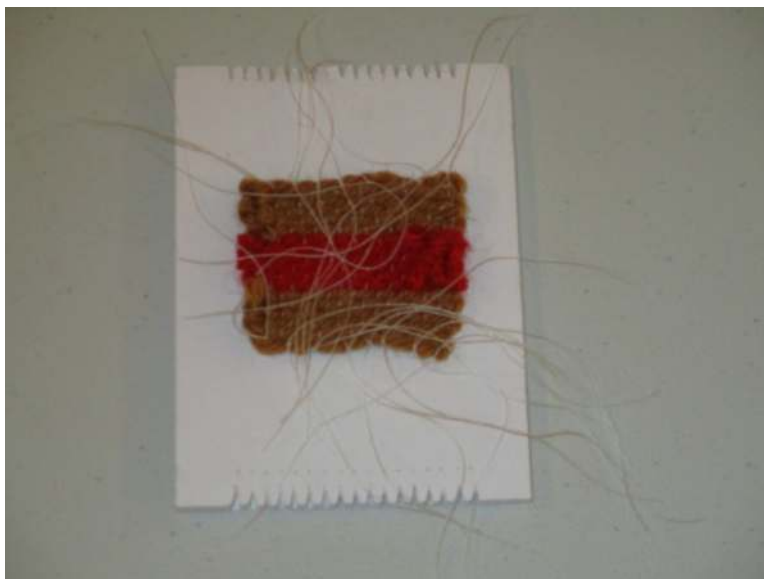


Pick one end to start with (top or bottom), and *leave the other end in place*. Otherwise both ends of the piece may start to get unravelled. You're already going to get a little bit of that.

Tie each pair of warp threads together (one front and one back, then the next front and back threads, and so on). If you have an odd number of threads, take the last three threads, and group front threads together and back threads together before tying them (or tie the one remaining thread to one of the already-tied threads, if you find that easier).



Once the threads on the first end have been tied, free the threads for the other end, and tie them the same way.



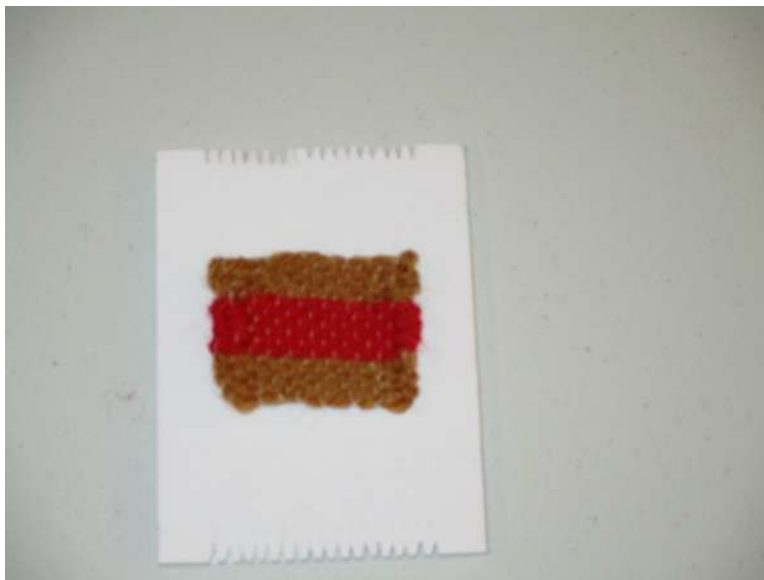
Ends of warp threads get woven in the same way yarn ends get woven in. Pick a different warp line, run them down that, then up another warp line, then down the first warp line, then trim the ends, leaving a small amount free.







Flip the piece over to show the front; the piece is now finished. There are ways to make the edges prettier, and other fancy things you can do (like making hanging loops from the warp or weft), but this gives you a basic woven project piece.



Enjoy!