

## The Rigid Heddle Loom – Simplified

*By Betsey from Michigan*

Select the yarns for the warp, and yarns for the weft. You can use any combination that pleases you. Remember that some yarns need to pass through the ‘eyes’ of the heddle, so pick smooth yarns that fit through easily. Begin by tying the first piece of yarn to the upright of a chair or use a C-clamp on a nearby table. Make sure the upright is the same distance from the *center front of the loom*, as you want for your warp length + add a few inches for tying onto front beam. (Warp threads behind the heddle will be ‘loom waste’ or can be used in fringe.) Position the warp threads in the center area of your heddle, putting in enough warp threads for the width you wish to weave.



Walk with your yarn from the chair, to the loom and thread a loop through a slot of the heddle and over a tooth in the back beam of the loom. Continue walking from the upright to the loom, threading a loop of the warp through the reed and over a tooth. An opened paperclip works well for pulling the yarn loop through the reed.

Add a roll of stiff paper (wallpaper will do) by tying it onto the back beam with string so it unrolls in the direction that your warp will wind onto the beam.



In addition to the stiff paper, you may wish to add a cardboard tube that has been slit – to cover the teeth of the beam. This ensures a smoother beaming process. Wind on your warp, by bringing the upright closer to the loom (or move the loom closer to the upright) a little at a time. Wind a bit, move closer a bit... You may need to straighten/comb your warp threads if they tangle, but keeping a bit of tension on them as you wind helps eliminate most tangles. Wind until about 10 inches of threads are still in front of the heddle.

Take one thread from each slot and thread it through the adjoining hole. A needle with a loop of thread makes this task easier.



Once all the warp threads have been placed in slots and holes, smooth them so they lie together, and tie knots at the ends of small groups of threads. These knots can then be lashed to the front beam. Adjust the lashing string so that each bundle of warp threads is under the same amount of tension. Place another cardboard tube over these knots to prevent the knots from creating lumps in your weaving.



Place the heddle in the ‘down’ position, passing the shuttle of weft yarn through the warp threads. The ends of the heddle will be held under the side blocks. The closer to the heddle that you hold your shuttle, the easier it is to move it through the opening (shed).



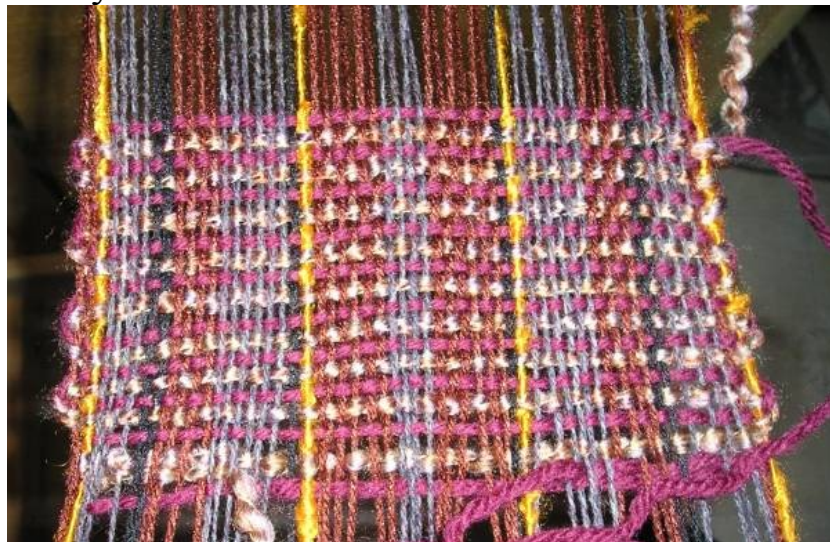
Place the heddle in the 'up' position to pass the second shuttle. (Or the same shuttle again, if using one shuttle of yarn.) The heddle will rest on the top of the side blocks.



If using two shuttles, you can overlock the two threads at the edge of your fabric. This keeps the edges of your weaving together. If your yarns are bulky, there will be a 'bump', which resembles a crocheted edging.



This last picture shows a weaving, just begun. You can see the edges, where the yarns have been overlapped. When the shuttle runs out of yarn, wrap the shuttle again (butterfly fashion) and overlap the tail of the new yarn with the old yarn about 2-3 inches. Press into place with the heddle and continue weaving. All tails of yarn are left until the fabric has been washed. They can then be clipped safely.



You can finish your weaving by tying small groups of knots for fringe, or machine stitching the edges.