



Building a cardboard loom & Basic Weaving

Materials:

- Sturdy cardboard
- Scissors
- Hobby knife (box cutter)
- Pencil and ruler
- Yarn

For younger students: using hobby knives requires adult supervision and very young students, parents, you may need to do the cutting for them.

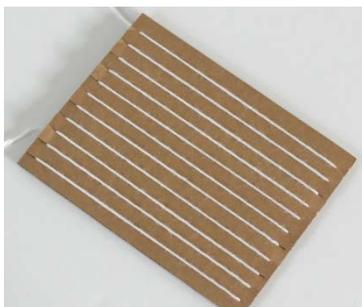
Steps:

To start, you need a loom. To create a simple loom, it can be done with cardboard. So before you start, you need to gather materials for the loom. You will need heavy cardboard. It needs to be sturdy. Then you will need a cutting board, hobby knife or box knife, a cutting board, pencil and ruler.

Step 1: Start by cutting out a square or rectangle. It can be various sizes, but for this demonstration, 4"x5". Be sure to cut it out on a cutting board.

Step 2: You will need to put marks where you will eventually cut slits along the top and bottom. I use centimeter ruler and mark the top and bottom 1 cm apart. Be sure that the top and bottom line up.

Step 3: Using a box cutter, cut the slits. Here make sure that the slits go all the way through and about a quarter of an inch deep. Again for safety be sure to cut away from you and on the cutting board. For younger children, this step is best done by a parent or under close supervision.



Step 4: Warping the loom. To start, you will need yarn or embroidering thread. Tie a knot in one end and then keeping the knot to the back of the loom push the string into the first groove on the top left hand side. Then wrap the threads through the slits up and down. If you follow along with the video you will see the two ways in which you can thread the warp thread. If you wrap the warp thread all the way around, when you finish your weaving,



you will have fringe. If you wrap the thread so that it is only on the front of the loom, the finished weaving will not have fringe. You can always add adornment to the weavings after you are done.

Now you have a small cardboard loom. The next lesson will show you how to begin weaving on the loom to create a coaster.

Tips

For older students who want more complexity, try making the slits an $\frac{1}{8}$ th of inch apart. With the closer gaps, you will have tighter weave and more options for color changes and if adventurous, extending your learning by exploring on-line resources showing weaving techniques to add patterns to your weaving.

Weaving on a Cardboard Loom

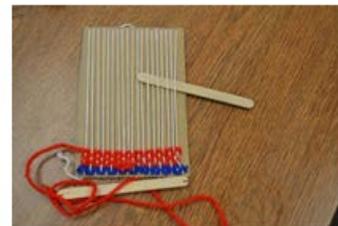
Material:

- Cardboard loom
- Popsicle stick with hole drilled or plastic/metal darning needle
- Yarn
- A fork to be used as a comb

Steps:

- 1) Weave the threaded needle through the warp threads, alternating between going over and under each warp or vertical string. It is easier if the popsicle is lying flat.
- 2) Pull the rest of the yarn through.
- 3) Make sure not to pull too tightly or the vertical string will be pulled inward, making the weaving narrower and misshapen.
- 4) If you want to change colors, be sure to weave your cut end back into the warp threads and then start the new color. The end of the new color needs to be woven back in so that no threads are exposed.
- 5) Repeat these steps until you have reached the top.

Steps to weaving



Step 1 Weave the shed through the vertical strings, alternating between going over and under each string.

- 6) FOR WARP ALL AROUND Cut the threads in the back of the loom across the middle if you have warped your loom all the way around.
- 7) Take three of the threads on the same end and tie them together, do this to the next three, repeat.
- 8) Do this until all the threads along the top and bottom are tied.
- 9) After this you can tie the end of the yarn into a knot, or tuck it into the weaving if you want it to be neater.
- 10) FOR WARP JUST ON THE FRONT OF THE LOOM: If you didn't wrap the warp thread around, you need to carefully and gently remove the weaving from the loom. If you want a finished edge, you can tie fringe to the ends or weave in ribbon.

History

Weaving began for the Navajo when Spiderboy brought the loom to the people in which he created the loom's frame from the power of the sun, the lashing cords of lightning and the warp strings of rain. Then Spiderwoman taught the women how to weave. Spiderman gave the seeds of cotton to the people who grew it and then using spindles began to spin into thread.

When the Spanish arrived in the 1500's, they brought with them domesticated animals such as horses, sheep and goats. The Churro sheep does well in the southwest and the wool is high quality. Taking the spinning and weaving skills, the Navajo people quickly adapted the wool into their weaving. Owning many sheep soon became a sign of prestige and prosperity and the flocks of the Diné were some of the largest in the Southwest.

Spinning and weaving wool is a long-held tradition among the Dine' and today they weave blankets, clothing, rugs, bedding, and saddle blankets. Weaving is also often a sacred activity. Religious stories, patterns, symbols, and color schemes can be woven into the weavings. These blankets then have certain sacred qualities and can be used as a tool to teach the younger generations about oral traditions and beliefs. Therefore, weaving was useful, cultural, educational, and sacred.

When the Dine' were forced marched to Bosque Redondo on the long walk, many brought their sheep. Their flocks had been decreased by the Army during the campaign against the Navajo which include burning crops, killing livestock, poisoning water sources and burning hogans. At Bosque Redondo, the numbers of sheep did decrease as they were starving. They needed the wool and they also needed to eat. At Bosque Redondo, wool and weaving were more important than ever. Because wood was scarce, it was impossible to build a proper hogan (a 6 to 8 sided wooden structure with center fire pit exhausted through a hole in the roof). The Dine' had to make do with rough shelters made from scraggly mesquite, which were poor protection from the elements. There also was not enough firewood to keep warm. Woven blankets and rugs were used to create and improve shelters, to stay warm, and to stay clothed under these rough conditions.

The army supplied them with old uniforms and army blankets and the women unraveled them and wove them into clothes and blankets. The army officers began to supply them with more wool from Germantown which were dyed in many colors. Captain McCabe

reported that the women could “fabricate a strong and durable cloth and elegant blankets of a variety of patterns and brilliant colors, for which purposes the Navajoes (sic) value the wool they obtain from their sheep. These fabrics are made in hand looms of simple construction by the women of the tribe. One industrious female can finish a blanket in 3 weeks, which will wear for ten years, is perfectly waterproof, and will command a price as high as \$50 to \$200” (Dec. 31st 1864). The new wool, with modern dyes, led to a dramatic increase in the brightness of the colors used in their weaving, though the traditional techniques and patterns usually remained.

After the Bosque

In the treaty between the U.S. Government and the Navajo was signed in 1868, the U.S. promised to grant every person (man, woman, and child) two sheep so that they could regrow their flocks and return to being self-sufficient. While it took until November of 1869 for the government to deliver on their agreement, the Dine’ eventually received 15,000 sheep and goats. Their head chief, Barboncito, said “Now you are beginning again. Take care of the sheep that have been given you, as you care for your own children. Never kill them for food. If you are hungry, go out after the wild animals and the wild plants. Or go without food, for you have done that before. These few sheep must grow into flocks so that we, the People, can be as we once were”

Weaving Now

Weaving was passed down from mother to daughter. Now weaving is more for commercial art than necessity and rugs can go from the hundreds to thousands of dollars. If you look at the top right hand corner of every rug, you will notice a single strand of yarn or contrasting color. This “mistake” is intentional and is called the weaver’s pathway. “This flaw is intentional, and the Navajo believe that this flaw allows the spirit of the blanket to have the freedom to roam, and for the blanket to never truly end.”