

Creating and Weaving on a Cardboard Box Loom

by Rabbi Emily Howard Meyer

Supplies:

Cardboard box (any size)
Scissors
Yarn (see notes in the text)
Dowel (for advanced loom)
Fork

1. Gather your supplies. Open the box and decide which direction you want to weave. Note: There will be fringes on the top and bottom, which may affect your weaving direction.



2. You are going to flip the sides inside. To do this, you will need to cut down the flaps. **DO NOT CUT THEM COMPLETELY OFF!** You need the added stability to reinforce the sides. Measure the difference and cut a strip off. Note: Save the strips, as you will use them later.



3. Fold the flaps in. You may need to tape them with some duct tape to secure them. You should have several strips and your box.



4. Using one side of your scissors, make a few divots. You can make them just on the ends, or if you want, you can measure them and cut divots every $\frac{1}{4}$ " or so (depending on the size of your yarn.) These divots will help your yarn stay in place. Try not to fully cut them. If the yarn settles into the divots, it will be hard to move the weaving to allow for more weaving space.



5. Make a slipknot and place the yarn in the first divot. Pull tight. Note about yarn: For this type of loom, I would choose a worsted-weight acrylic yarn, like the cheap Red Heart yarn. It can take the stress of the loom without breaking, and for most projects, it is the perfect choice.



6. Begin to wind the warp around the box, either using the divots to space out the yarn, or trying to keep it evenly spaced out (it doesn't have to be perfect.) Tie a knot at the end.



7. Cut one of the strips into a shuttle. You should use the one that is equal in width to your warp. To cut: cut both ends in a slightly rounded shape. Then cut the groove in both ends.



8. Wind your weft in a cross on one side of the shuttle. When it has enough bulk, begin to wind more weft in a similar manner on the other side of the shuttle. You can see a video on how to do this here: <https://youtu.be/WopKnJFTVbM?si=dOCsfykYNSxlv5IC>



Note about weft yarn: You can use any yarn for this project, but I have found that chunky or super chunky yarn or even fabric strips are the best. It takes less time for a person to weave a completed cloth, and it teaches the techniques without frustrating the student. It also hides a myriad of “creative bobbles” that happen with beginning weaving.

NOW YOU CAN START WEAVING!

1. Using your fingers and the shuttle pickup, every other string. Push the shuttle through, leaving a tail.



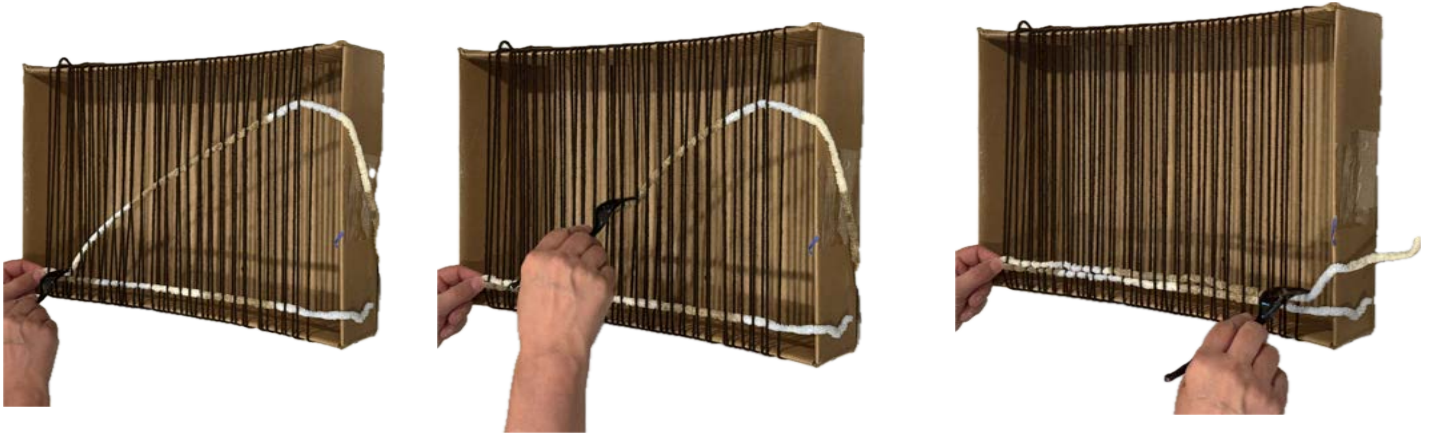
2. Pick up the opposite strings, using the shuttle to hold them, and go in the opposite direction.



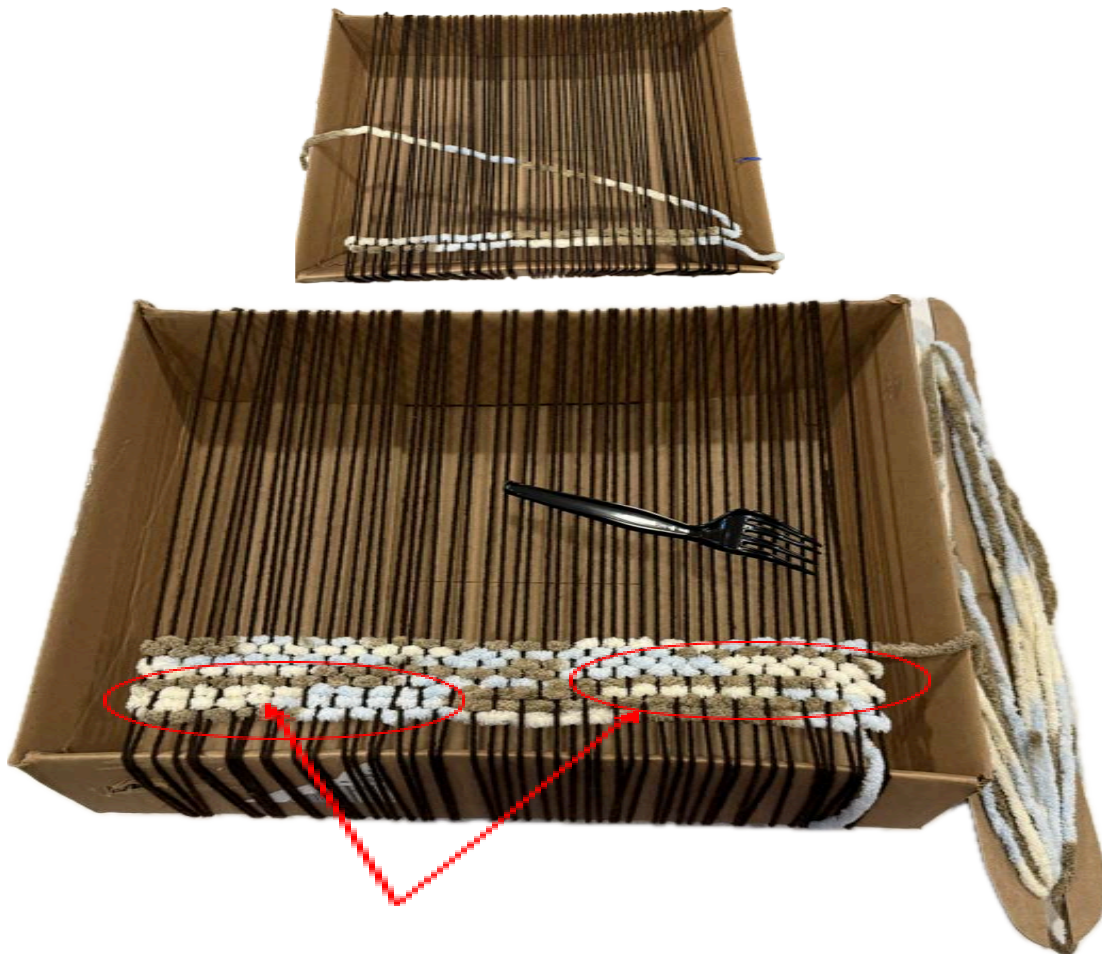
3. When you pull the shuttle through, be careful not to pull too hard against the strings on the left side, as it will cause them to bunch together. The easiest way to prevent this is to bring out the shuttle and place the weft at an angle.



4. Using your fork, begin to gently pack down the weft against the first weft. Be careful not to push too hard as you might move the first line of weaving out of square.



5. Pick up the opposite warp strings again and pass the shuttle through, bringing the yarn to an angle and packing it down gently with the fork. Repeat.



Look! I made two mistakes! I didn't go over, under, and then the reverse. It's important to stress that these things happen. I call them "creative bobbles." Don't let your students stress over mistakes. They are what makes it interesting.

MOVING YOUR WORK

When you have reached a point where your shuttle can no longer go through, you can move your work down a bit.

1. Turn the box over and gently pull down a bit, shifting the work around the box.



2. Your work may become a little wonky. Take some time to straighten it out again and repack with your fork.

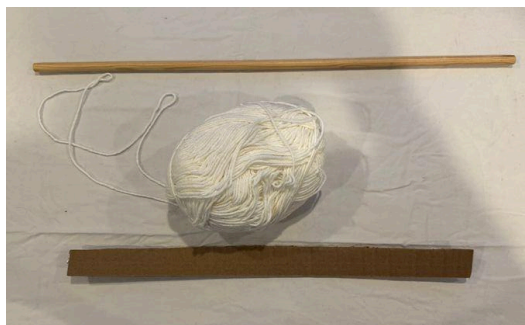


3. Flip the box over and begin weaving again.

CREATING A MORE COMPLEX LOOM

You will find that picking up every other string is very slow. Ancient weavers found this to be so as well. So they created workarounds to speed up the process.

You will need a dowel, cotton crochet thread or yarn, and two of your extra pieces of cardboard. You can one piece (because you used the other for the shuttle) into two thinner pieces.



1. Begin by picking up every other strand and sliding your extra piece of cardboard through.

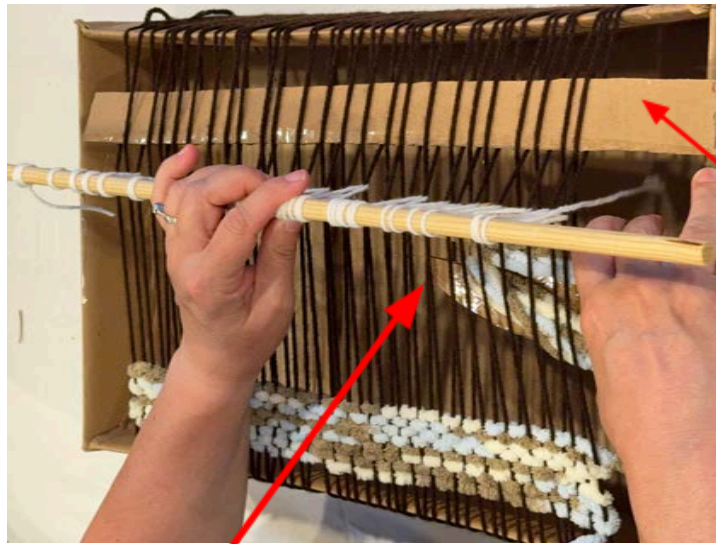


2. This is the hard part. Create a slipknot and place it on the dowel. Run the cotton crochet yarn a bit through to give you some space to work. You can either pick up the threads which are sitting on top of the cardboard, or you can pick up the ones below. The motion is very similar to casting on in knitting. You are going to loop the crochet yarn around the warp string and then make a loop around the dowel. If you want you can create another loop to lock the string in. There are many ways to do this, here is a video of a different way: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z0kHGNzFFfw>



When you raise the dowel, all the warp strings that have loops around them will raise, giving you what is called a “shed,” an open area in which to push the shuttle through. Therefore, you no longer need to pick each thread individually; the dowel does it.

3. Now, weave one of the cardboard strips behind the dowel, picking up the opposite strings from those being held in the loops.



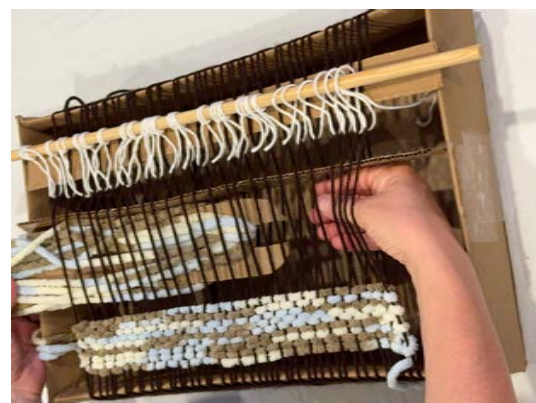
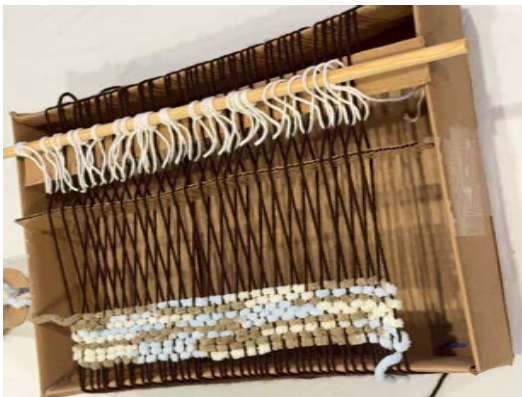
Behind the dowel.

This is the “shed” or the space created by holding up the warp strings.

4. Don't want to hold up that dowel all the time? Hold it up once, and then insert the other cardboard strip.



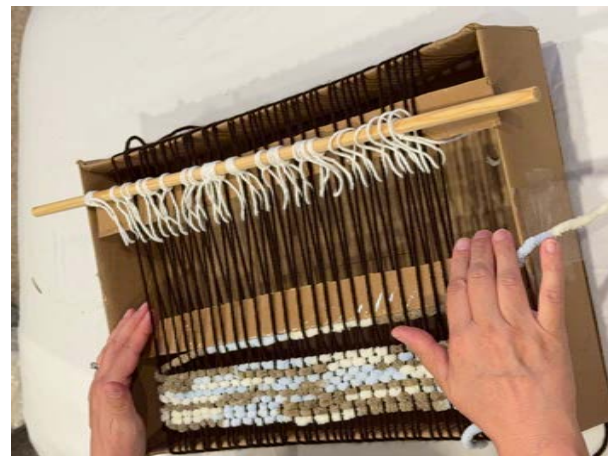
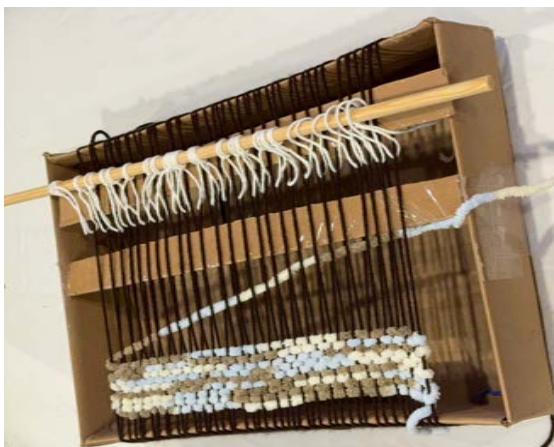
5. Now, turn the cardboard strip on its side and your shed will stay open for you to pass your shuttle through!



6. Remember to make the triangle with your yarn.



7. You can then use the cardboard to push the yarn into place. No more fork!



8. Turn the back cardboard piece on its side, and it will raise the opposite strings. Place your front cardboard piece in the space, pass your shuttle, and press the yarn into place.





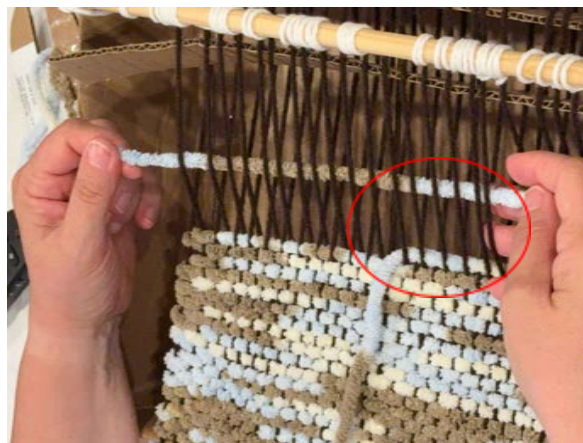
WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU RUN OUT OF YARN?

The golden rule of weaving is never to tie knots in your weft. It will create an unsightly bump. You can overlay the yarns.

1. Try and finish a shuttle in the middle of your work somewhere. Pull the tail forward, toward the front of your weaving.



2. Reload your shuttle and then pass it through again, pulling the tail forward to the front of the weaving, but allowing some of it to overlap inside the shed.



3. Pack the threads together with the cardboard or with your fork and continue weaving.

Continue weaving until the piece reaches the desired length, moving the work forward as needed.

FINISHING

1. To finish the piece, leave approximately 4-6" between the beginning and the end.
2. Cut across the warp strings.
3. Gather 2-4 warp strings together, loop them around your finger, and create an overhand knot.
4. Cut the fringe ends so that they are even.

NOTE: There are other ways to finish your weaving. I encourage you to research different knotting and sewing techniques; however, the overhand knot is the easiest for most people and creates a nice fringe.