

Instructions

FingerWeaving Instructions

The Handout to Accompany the Video

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Fingerweaving is an ancient low-tech method for creating cloth. Few tools are required and you can produce a dense, sturdy cloth. I have been teaching this method for many years, and students have been asking me to put my instructions on a video. Included is the information intended to help you learn to use your fingers to create the cloth.

This video contains information on two different approaches to fingerweaving:

I developed the first approach (the STAR method) when I worked with children. It is a simple, direct method to introduce the structure.

The second approach (advanced method) introduces a more efficient use of the fingers. It is the way I work when I weave sashes.

Either can be used to create lovely, large pieces. I recommend you start with the STAR method to train your eye to see the structure, before you try the Advanced Method. It will seem uncomfortable at first, because your fingers have not worked in this manner before. You might be surprised how quickly your fingers adjust to the method, and then how efficient your fingers can become.

Start out with yarn that you have around the house. If you have a choice, thicker yarn is preferable to thinner yarn. You will be able to see the stitches more easily, and you will create a larger piece more quickly. While you can use any fiber, cotton, acrylic, linen, silk, the traditional choice is wool. Wool grabs to wool. You will find this an annoying trait at the beginning, but later you will find it is exceedingly helpful: threads once put in place will tend to stay in place.

At the beginning of your explorations, focus on the stitch, to see that you have the correct structure. Each row will have a slightly downhill slant. This is completely normal.



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Learn to listen to that quiet voice at the back of your head that says, "I'm not sure that looks right." An irregularity in the alignment of the threads will cause an irregularity in the cloth. The careful weaver will notice this right away and will correct it. The creative weaver will want to figure out how it happened, and will attempt to repeat it as a design element.

Finish the lower edge of the cloth by creating a fringe. Twist the threads in pairs, or in groups. This will prevent unraveling, and adds a decorative touch. The upper edge will also need finishing. Remove the shed sticks, untie the knot, and twist threads in pairs to create fringes on this edge as well.

Patterns in this video are arranged in a specific order, intended as an easy step-by-step progression. Know that there are no weaving police who will arrest you for your weave structure. No illness or death will befall you for errors in your technique. If your work becomes a tangled mess, tell yourself, "Its just a pile of threads" ... and perhaps you have had a few hours of entertainment. Put it away for a few days before trying again. Things may be far easier after a few nights of good sound sleep.

High quality fingerweaving features a warp-faced structure. This means that the weft (sideways) thread is completely hidden, and only the warp (lengthwise) threads are visible. Beginners are encouraged to be happy with a loosely woven cloth. Threads need to be loose in order to make correct thread selection. Go for even rather than tight to get the structure right. Tension issues can be addressed in subsequent pieces. Many tension issues completely evaporate with time, as your hands become accustomed to the technique, and perform it evenly.

Once you progress beyond the beginning stages, you may find fingerweaving to be a calming, even meditative process. I hope you will come to enjoy the process, as you produce beautiful pieces of cloth.

Beginner method

Measure out 8 strands,
4 of color A, and 4 of color B,
each approx 18 inches long.

Select
Travel
Arrange
Regroup

