



Circular Weaving

Have you tried weaving? It's an enjoyable craft with lots of room for creativity. Although for many projects you need a loom, this project allows you to try out weaving without one - just use an embroidery hoop as your loom!

Materials and equipment:

You will need:

- an embroidery hoop - often you can pick these up at an op shop, sized from 15cm diameter upward - larger frames will require more yarn and take longer to complete
- yarn: a strong yarn in a neutral colour for the warp threads; a selection of yarns in the colours and thicknesses of your choice for the weft
- scissors, tapestry needle (blunt end, large eye), crochet hook, some spare cardboard

You will notice from the photos that I didn't end up using all the yarns I assembled for the project: as you are working, you will decide the effect that you want. If you are using a small hoop like I did, you will only need small quantities of each type of yarn, and can use up scraps you have on hand.

Setting up your warp

For the warp threads, you need to use a strong yarn which will not break easily or stretch, as it will be under some pressure while you are weaving. The warp is the thread that is set up on the loom first, and holds the tension while you weave other threads over and under it.

Remove the outer circle with the screw from your embroidery hoop, and set it aside.

Measure out the length of warp thread you will need: this will be the diameter of your hoop times the number of spokes you plan to have, plus a few more for good measure. On my 16 cm diameter hoop I put 19 spokes, so I needed about $16\text{cm} \times 22 = 352\text{cm}$. For a larger hoop you will need more spokes: they should be about 3cm apart on rim of your hoop. Wind the yarn around a small piece of cardboard so it doesn't get tangled. This is your shuttle.





Week Nineteen



1. Leaving a tail of about 10cm, tie one end of the yarn around the hoop - it doesn't matter where you start. Use a single knot: you're going to undo it later.
2. Hold it down with a finger of your non-dominant hand, and put the shuttle of yarn into the middle of the hoop. Stretch it across the hoop to the other side, around the frame, and back into the middle of the hoop.
3. Hold the new spot where the yarn goes around the frame with your finger, and stretch the yarn back to close to where you started, about 2-3 cm away.
4. Go around the frame, back into the middle of the hoop, hold the new spot, and stretch the yarn across the frame, crossing over the other thread in a figure 8, and keep repeating until you have all the spokes of your wheel completed.
5. Make sure you have an uneven number of spokes: it will make it much easier to weave. Make sure all the threads are taut. When you have all your spokes, wrap your thread around the centre where the threads cross, so that all the threads are pulled to a tight bunch. Do this a couple of times, then bring your thread back to the starting point where your tail is. Undo your single knot, and tie the two ends together with a double knot, making sure all the spokes are evenly spaced and that the thread is taut.

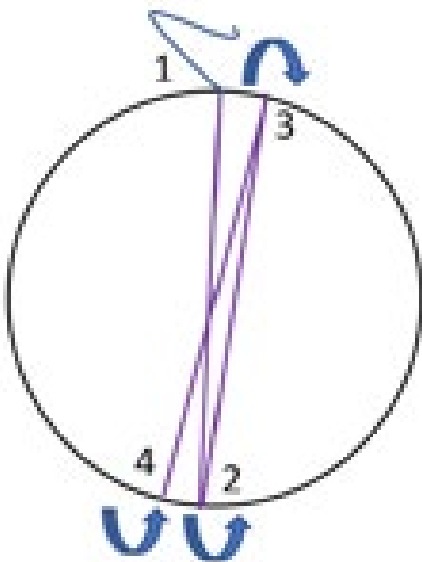


Diagram 1:

Steps 1-4 of setting up the warp: the curved arrows show where the thread comes from the inside of the frame around the outside.

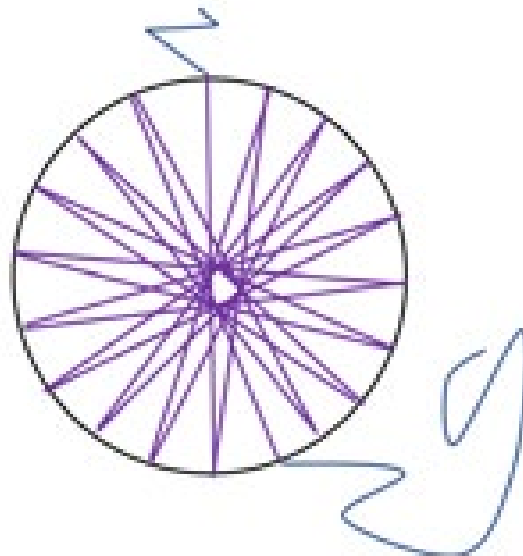


Diagram 2:

Step 5, showing all spokes completed, ready to wrap the end of the thread around all the threads in the centre, then tie to the starting tail.

When you have finished setting up your warp, put the outside part of the embroidery hoop back on and tighten the screw. This will stop your warp threads from slipping about while you work.



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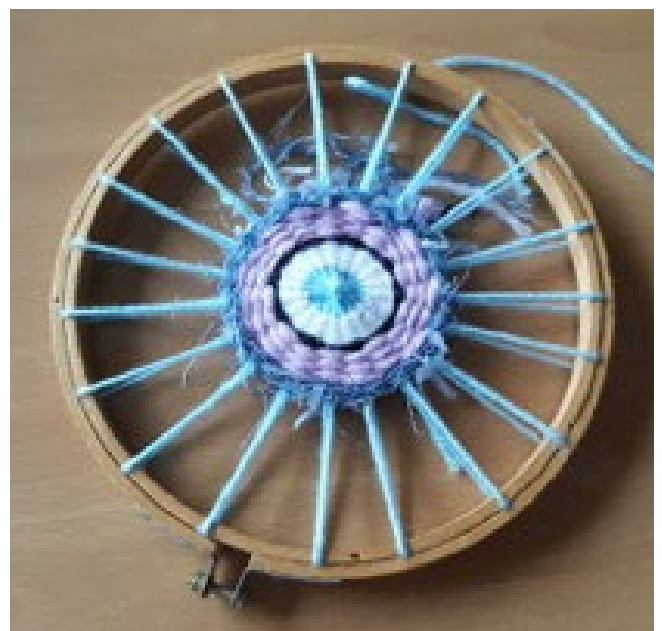
Weaving your design

The thread you use to weave your design is called the weft. You can use a range of different threads, but it's best to use a finer thread, such as 4 ply wool, for the centre, where your spokes are very close together. Start at any space between two spokes. Cut a length of about one metre of yarn, and thread it on your tapestry needle. Leaving a tail of about 10cm, use the tapestry needle to go over one spoke, under the next, over, under, over, under, and so on... To make it easier to see what you are doing, start a few centimetres out from the centre, and then pull the thread close in to the centre, so it wraps around the spokes in a spiral shape. When you get right around the circle, so long as you have an uneven number of spokes, you will find that you are going under the spoke you went over the first time, and over the spoke you went under the first time, and so on.



When you have nearly used up your thread, or you decide you have done enough of that yarn, change to a new piece of yarn. Just start the new yarn beside where you finished the old yarn, again leaving a tail of about 10cm. When you have done a few rows, you can sew in the tails by threading them through a few rows of weaving of the same colour at the back of your work. Keep your weaving at an even tension, and push the rows in toward the centre, gently tugging on the end of your thread, so they are quite firm. As you work your way to the outer part of the circle, you will need more thread to reach around the circle.

You can weave your whole piece in concentric circles, or if you prefer, you can do patches of different colours and textures on different parts of your circle. Experiment with different weights of yarn, from fine cotton or wool, to fancy yarns with bumps and bobbles, to chunky yarns and wool roving (used for spinning). For chunky yarn that is too thick to thread on your tapestry needle, wind it around a small piece of cardboard, and use this 'shuttle' to go over and under your warp threads. For really thick yarns, you may prefer to just use your fingers, or you may find a crochet hook helpful to manoeuvre the yarn into place. To secure these yarns on the back of your work, use a tail from a thinner yarn to oversew them so they are held firmly in place.





Week Nineteen

Grown > Connect > Improve
CRAFT

When you get so close to the edge of the hoop that it is not comfortable to work, stop. Finish off any loose threads. Hang your circular weaving on the wall (using the tightening screw) and admire!



Back of weaving, showing the chunky purple yarn oversewn with blue to secure it.

