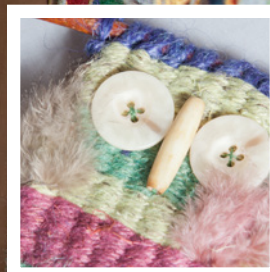
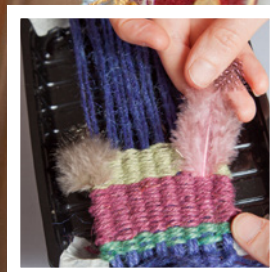




# Tapestry Weaving





# Countryside Crafts: Tapestry Weaving

## Summary

Tapestry weaving is an ancient craft that came to prominence in England in the medieval times when kings, queens and nobles furnished their draughty halls with richly woven tapestries on a vast scale. This had the dual effect of showing off their wealth and keeping them warm. Henry VIII had a large collection of woven tapestries, some of them still on display at Hampton Court Palace. Much earlier examples of the technique are found in ancient Egypt and Peru.

Tapestries woven today are generally on a smaller scale but large pieces still have an important function in offices and public buildings where they improve the acoustic properties of large spaces (eg. in The British Library foyer and Portcullis House, Houses of Parliament). Many tapestries are woven to adorn private residences and office spaces, ranging from a few centimetres in size to several metres. The technique of tapestry weaving does not require a complicated loom (as in cloth weaving) as it requires the direct positioning of the yarn by hand to make the pattern or picture rather than mechanised loom parts.

Tapestries are traditionally woven with natural materials like wool, silk, linen and cotton but contemporary work can include anything that is flexible enough to be woven, eg. plastic bags, paper, old clothing, wires and glitzy threads. The main difference between tapestry weaving and cloth weaving is that tapestry is weft-faced. The coloured weft completely covers the warp (threads strung on the loom / frame). This produces a very dense, less flexible fabric. However some contemporary weavers leave areas of warp exposed as part of the design (which can be painted).



# Countryside Crafts: Tapestry Weaving

## Case Study

**Jackie Bennett, Tapestry Weaver living in Lewes, East Sussex.**

I started weaving on small frames as a child. I taught myself from books and experimented with different ways to make a simple loom, hand dyeing garden string and other cheap materials. Later I found an evening class to learn the traditional techniques and went on to study at West Dean College (post-graduate diploma).

I still enjoy experimenting with techniques and materials and exhibit nationally and internationally. I like to work with the warp and weft to show off the properties of the weave as part of the design or picture. I often weave houses, which start at the bottom and build up around the windows to the roof. This illustrates my analogy that tapestry weaving is like building a brick wall whilst painting a mural on it at the same time. I have a natural love of fabrics and fibres and also the landscapes I find myself in (urban and rural), which can be satisfied by the design and weaving of tapestries.

[www.jackietapestry.com](http://www.jackietapestry.com)



# Countryside Crafts: Tapestry Weaving

## Activity Idea

This project introduces basic weaving skills which can be learnt by all ages. The loom itself is best set up in advance by adults (the more you do the easier it gets). Use thicker yarns for those with less patience - you can double or quadruple the wefts. The fun part is adding the feathers etc.

## YOU WILL NEED

Small Plastic food tray (used to pack fruit, veg and meat) or small strong box such as a shoe box (per pupil)

2x Thin sticks (eg. garden canes, withies, tree prunings, approx pencil thick) length to fit the width of the top of the box/ tray (per loom). Trim with secateurs.

Strong string for warp (coloured garden string is ideal, or parcel string – natural cotton or jute is best)

Wool (such as chunky knitting or carpet wool) and synthetic yarns, thin strips of material or plastic, ribbons, feathers (washed and dyed) etc – for weft

Sticky tape / masking tape, scissors and ruler  
Buttons, beads etc for eyes and beak, glue or needle and thread

## TIME TO MAKE

2-3 hours, depending on thickness of weaving materials and size of looms – prepare the looms first. Step 7 suggests ways to finish quicker.

## SUGGESTED SUPPLIERS

Try your local scrap store and regional Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers, who might have suitable weaving yarns and other items free or at low cost.

Hardware or garden suppliers for garden string.

Nutscene has garden string in many colours (lilac no.3 thickness used as warp in photos)  
[www.nutscene.com](http://www.nutscene.com)

Hand weavers Studio  
[www.handweavers.co.uk](http://www.handweavers.co.uk)

Fibre crafts  
[www.georgeweil.com/Fibre crafts.aspx](http://www.georgeweil.com/Fibre crafts.aspx)

Weavers Bazaar  
[www.weaversbazaar.com](http://www.weaversbazaar.com)

## USEFUL WEBSITES

The British Tapestry Group  
[www.thebritishtapestrygroup.co.uk](http://www.thebritishtapestrygroup.co.uk)

East Sussex Guild of Weavers Spinners and Dyers  
[www.esgwsd.org.uk](http://www.esgwsd.org.uk)

Weavers Bazaar  
[www.weaversbazaar.com/knowledge-zone/tapestry-weaving](http://www.weaversbazaar.com/knowledge-zone/tapestry-weaving)

Open Directory  
[www.dmoz.org/Arts/Crafts/Textiles/Weaving/Tapestry](http://www.dmoz.org/Arts/Crafts/Textiles/Weaving/Tapestry)

The Big Weave  
[www.thebigweave.org/about.html](http://www.thebigweave.org/about.html)

Wissa Wassef, Egypt  
[www.wissa-wassef-arts.com/intro.htm](http://www.wissa-wassef-arts.com/intro.htm)

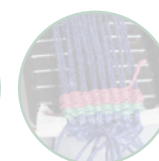
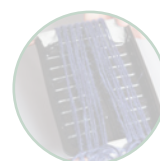
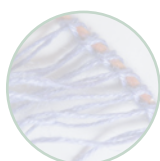


# Countryside Crafts: Tapestry Weaving

## STEP 1

Prepare the loom by taking 2 sticks, cut to the width of the top of the box or tray.

Measure lengths of string across the top of the box, allowing an extra 20cm approx. for tying. Double up each length before cutting. (photo) You will need approx 1 double length per 1cm width of box top but leave approx 2cm at each side (these are the warps). In photo the tray is 18cm long and single string length 80cm approx.

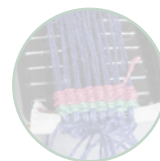
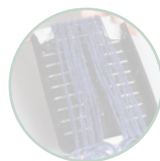


# Countryside Crafts: Tapestry Weaving

## STEP 2

Attach each doubled up string to one of the sticks, pushing the cut ends through the loop of string around the stick (larks head knot).

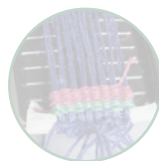
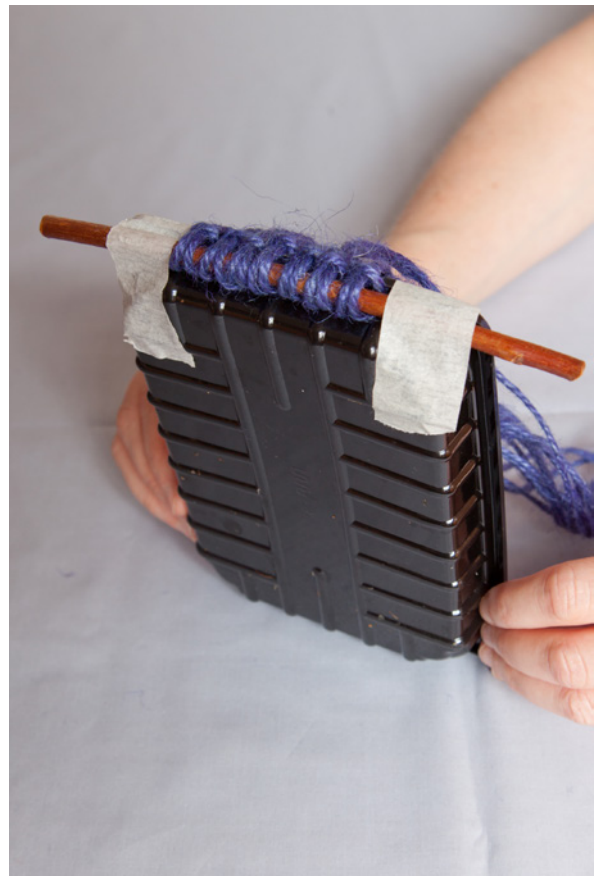
This video will help: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WyzUmetVJFA>



# Countryside Crafts: Tapestry Weaving

## STEP 3

Tape the stick with the warps on to the outside edge of the top of the open box end, or just under the rim, if using a tray (one piece of tape at each corner). Space warps evenly across width.



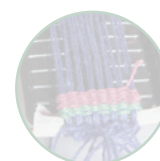
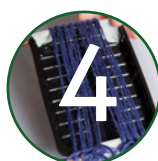
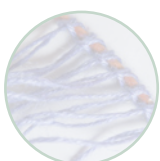
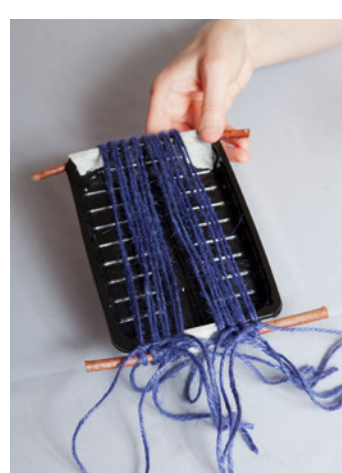


# Countryside Crafts: Tapestry Weaving

## STEP 4

Tape the other stick temporarily to the other end of the tray with one piece of tape in the middle of the stick. Working around the tape, take each double warp in turn, starting with the middle ones. Tie the warps to the stick (reef knot, splitting double string around stick) so it is exactly the right length to be tight across the box. You may wish to cut notches in the box top to keep string in place.

Tie all the string lengths in order, then un-tape the stick in the middle and tape securely to the corners. Leave extra string hanging down the side (this will be a fringe or tail).





# Countryside Crafts: Tapestry Weaving

## STEP 5

The loom is now ready to weave on. Start at the reef knot end, selecting a weft yarn or strip of material, go under and over alternate warps (keep the string doubled up, so each 'warp' is a double string).

Tuck the starting and finishing end behind as you go.



# Countryside Crafts: Tapestry Weaving

## STEP 6

Push the weft down the warp towards the starting end of the box every few passes (journey of the weft across the box) so that it compacts, aiming for the warp to be completely covered.





# Countryside Crafts: Tapestry Weaving

## STEP 7

Weave in feathers, try making stripes or anything else that takes your fancy until the weaving reaches about two-thirds of the way up the box. You may wish to weave further but it gets tighter.

The sticks can then be detached from the box. The weaving can be left on the sticks with a hanging loop of string or yarn attached to the top OR the bottom reef knots can be undone and the weft firmly slid up the warps until the weaving is against the larks head knots and top stick.



# Countryside Crafts: Tapestry Weaving

## STEP 8

To transform into an owl, bunch together the warp threads at the bottom and tie an overhand knot with all warps. Re-insert the stick above the knot by threading through a couple of warps (stick becomes a perch). Trim sticks if too long.





# Countryside Crafts: Tapestry Weaving

## STEP 9

Trim any long ends of weft on the back to approx. 1cm

You can add buttons for eyes, a beak and ears by sewing or sticking on to the woven body

