

Dressing the Loom Back-to-Front

By Chris Hammel

1. Hang a piece of strong yarn over the back of the castle. Bring the ends together and tie a knot – the knot should be level with the eyes of the heddles. Repeat Step 1 so that there are two pieces of yarn attached to the back of the castle.
2. Attach the raddle to the back beam.
3. Attach a piece of strong yarn to each end of the tie-on rod at the back of the loom (i.e., the rod attached to the warp beam). Unwind the rod so that it is half way between the warp beam and the back beam. Tie the yarns that are attached to the rod over the raddle or back beam to keep the rod suspended.
4. Starting from the front of the loom, draw the end of the warp with the cross and counting thread through the heddle area to the back of the loom.
5. Insert the lease sticks into the cross (one on each side) and connect the ends of the lease sticks with metal rings to keep the warp from sliding off.
6. Suspend the lease sticks from the castle using the yarns from Step 1. To accomplish this, remove the metal rings, slide the yarns onto the lease stick closest to the castle, and then put the metal rings back on.
7. Insert a rod into the loops at the end of the warp. *Be sure to catch every loop.* Going forward, this rod will be referred to as the loop rod.
8. Draw the loop rod (and warp) over the raddle. Tie the loop rod loosely to the tie-on rod that is suspended between the back beam and warp beam. There needs to be enough space between the rods to slide the loops around. *Before you tie the loop rod to the tie-on rod, make sure that the warp, from the cross to the loop rod, is not twisted. If it is, simply rotate the loop rod to remove any twists, making sure that the loops do not fall off in the process.*
9. Check that everything is tied well and that the metal rings have not popped open. Now untie the four yarns at the cross and the yarn(s) securing the loops at the end of the warp.
10. Using the counting thread (that was installed when winding the warp), spread out the warp into ½" or 1" groups in the raddle. Stretch rubber bands over the nails in the raddle to keep the warp threads from popping out. Do not allow the rubber band to touch the warp ends. Otherwise, the rubber bands could create drag on the warp ends when you are beaming on.
11. Spread the loops/warp ends out on the rod and then tie the two rods tightly together in three or more places.
12. Untie the two yarns that are holding up the tie-on rod. *Don't confuse them with the yarns securing the raddle to the loom.*

13. Go to the front of the loom and clean up a segment of the warp (approx. one yard) with your fingers.
14. Roll the warp onto the warp beam separating the layers of yarn with paper or wooden sticks. Stop frequently to check for problematic areas and to clean up more of the warp. Stop winding when the end of the warp reaches the front beam.
 - Make sure there is tension on the warp when it is beamed. You can have another person hold the warp, or you can use weights or a trapeze.
 - If you are using paper to separate the layers of yarn, make sure that it goes on straight. Keep your eye on one of the edges and carefully monitor that it does not veer to the right or left.
 - Once the beginning of the paper is secured, roll up the paper, hold it in the center with one hand (at a downward slant) and keep good tension on the paper when you beam.
 - Tighten the layers on the back beam regularly by gathering the warp in front of the beater, placing your foot on the front beam and pulling the warp towards you.
15. Cut the end of the warp.
16. Figure out the number of heddles needed on each shaft for the right half of the warp. Slide this amount to the center. Begin threading the heddles, working from right to left. To thread the left side, you can slide over the heddles as they are needed. Regardless of which side you are threading, however, it is a good idea to create check points to ensure that you have not made threading errors. For example, count out the number of heddles needed for the next pattern repeat, and separate these heddles from the total amount that you counted out for that side of the loom. After you finish threading the pattern repeat, you should have no extra threads and no extra heddles. Repeat the process for the next pattern repeat.
17. Sley the reed. Use the Reed Substitution Chart to figure out the number of threads to put in each dent. Starting at the center of the reed, measure out half of the width of the warp. Sley the warp from right to left starting at this location in the reed.
18. Remove the raddle and the lease sticks that are holding the cross.
19. Tie or lash the warp onto the tie-on rod. Instructions for both methods are on other resource pages.