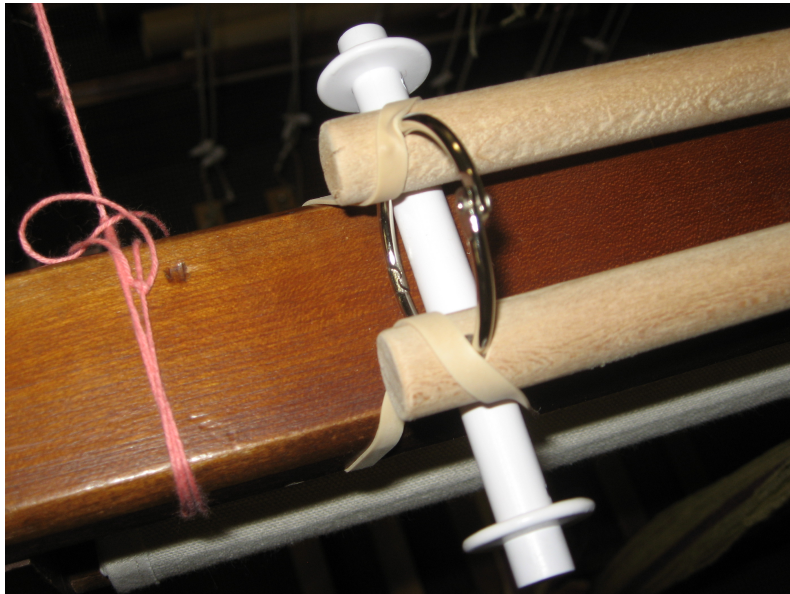


Dressing the Loom Front-to-Back

By Chris Hammel

1. Position the reed so that it is perpendicular to the floor and secure it in place. If the loom is not set up with holes and a peg to keep the beater perpendicular, tie a piece of strong yarn from the beater to the castle and another piece from the beater to the front beam in order to anchor it in place.
2. Insert a lease stick on each side of the cross in the warp, and connect the ends of the lease sticks with metal rings or yarn.
3. With the end of the warp that is closest to the cross going in the direction of the loom (and the other end going away from the loom), secure the lease sticks on or near the front beam.

If the front beam is flat and parallel with the floor, the lease sticks can be secured to the front beam using two bobbins and two rubber bands in the following manner. Position the lease sticks on the front beam. Place a bobbin under the lease sticks on the right side of the loom – place it up against the metal ring. Using both hands, stretch a rubber band under the front beam, bring the ends of the rubber band over the ends of the bobbin and then over the ends of the lease sticks. Repeat these steps for the left side of the loom.



If the front beam is not flat, suspend the lease sticks near the front beam using strong yarn. The lengths required will depend on the individual loom. Fold a piece of strong yarn in half over the front beam and tie the ends together in a knot – this yarn should form a loop that extends approx. 1" out from the front beam. Hang a much longer piece of yarn over the front of the castle (or shaft 1), bring the ends together and tie them in a knot – this yarn should form a loop that falls short of reaching the other loop by approx. 1 ½". Repeat these steps so that there are two loops extending from the front beam and two loops extending from the castle (or shaft 1) – one for the right side of the loom and one for the

left. Once the loops are in place, I do not recommend that you simply open up the metal rings that are attached to the lease sticks and slide the loops onto the rings. The reason is that the lease sticks will not stay apart, and this will impede your ability to see the order of the warp ends in the cross. Instead, working one side at a time, remove the metal ring, slide the loops onto the lease sticks (one loop on each stick) and reinstall the ring.

4. Prepare to sley the reed. Examine the length of the warp from the lease sticks to the closest end of the warp. If the length is insufficient, warp ends can fall back out of the dents after they have been sleyed. If the length is excessive, it can increase the amount of time and effort required to sley the reed. I like to have approx. 8" hanging out of the reed. If necessary, adjust the length needed to comfortably sley the reed.

5. Before you start to dress the loom, you should preserve the orderliness that currently exists in the warp by tying the warp in a square knot around the frame of the loom or a treadle. This can be easily accomplished by bringing the inactive length (that is, the yardage on the other side of the lease sticks) straight down from the front beam to the frame of the loom. Draw a short length of the warp under the frame of the loom or under one of the center treadles in such a manner that it forms a loop. Using the loop and the next segment of warp, tie a square knot around the frame or treadle. Every time you need an additional length of warp to continue dressing the loom, you will need to untie the knot, let out more warp and then retie the knot. This knot not only prevents a potential mess from traveling down the entire length of the warp, but it provides a place that you can pull against to clean up the warp as you move from one step to the next. **This knot is the essential key to happiness when you dress the loom from front-to-back.**

6. Cut the loops at the end of the warp near the cross if they have not yet been cut.

7. 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.

8. If the warp is not distributed singly in the dents, you will need to move the cross to the other side of the reed. Follow these steps:
 - a. Gather the sleyed ends of the warp into groups and secure them with slip knots.
 - b. Hang a long piece of strong yarn over the right side of the castle, bring the ends together and tie them in a knot. The knot should be level with the eye of the heddles. Make a second loop for the left side of the loom. Use these loops to temporarily suspend the lease sticks during the transfer process.
 - c. Gather 2 extra lease sticks, 2 extra metal rings, a wide stick (e.g., a pick-up stick) and a small to medium-size clamp.
 - d. The first part of the cross that needs to be transferred is represented by the lease stick closest to the beater. Slide the wide stick between the two layers of warp held by this lease stick.
 - e. Draw the wide stick to the beater, shift it onto its side and clamp it to the reed.
 - f. Pull on the groups of warp ends on the other side of the reed – the wide stick should produce two layers of warp on the other side of the reed.

- g. Insert one of the extra lease sticks between the two layers, and suspend the lease stick from the loops hanging from the castle (or shaft 1).
 - h. Remove the clamp, wide stick and original lease stick (i.e., the one closest to the beater). Be sure to leave the other original lease stick in place.
 - i. Slide the wide stick between the two layers of warp held by the remaining lease stick, and repeat Steps e through g.
 - j. Once both parts of the cross have been transferred, remove the clamp, wide stick and original lease stick. Then, suspend the lease sticks in such a way that you can easily see the ends in the cross from the position that you will be sitting in when you dress the heddles.
9. Figure out the number of heddles needed on each shaft for the right half of the warp. Slide these amounts to the center. If necessary, adjust the length of warp needed to comfortably dress the heddles. 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.
10. Standing at the back of the loom, finger comb the warp until it is very smooth from the knot at the bottom of the loom to the cut ends that you are combing.
11. Tie the warp onto the tie-on rod at the back of the loom.

Working from right to left, gather the ends in $\frac{1}{2}$ " to $\frac{3}{4}$ " groups and secure each group temporarily with a slip knot.

Starting with the outer groups and working towards the center from both sides, tie the groups to the tie-on rod following these steps:

- a. Bring the group under the tie-on rod.
 - b. Divide the group in half. It is helpful to look at the heddles when doing this.
 - c. Bring both halves over the rod and to the outside of the whole group (right half on the right side and left half on the left side).
 - d. Cross the halves beneath the group. The right half comes up on the left side of the whole group, and the left half comes up on the right.
 - e. Tie the two halves together in a half-hitch.
12. Untie the knot that is binding the warp to the loom.
 13. 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 sections 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.

14. Tie or lash the warp onto the tie-on rod. Instructions for both methods are on other resource pages.