

SWATCH PAGE

CARDWEAVING

Cardweaving is one of the more underrated areas of weaving, in spite of its great versatility and broad tradition. Its origins disappear into antiquity, and examples of this technique may be found in a wide variety of cultures, from Central Asia, Tibet, and the Mideast to Scandinavia. Yet many have viewed it as merely a slightly confusing way to weave belts, and have missed its rich possibilities.

Unlike inkle bands, which are basically a two harness weave, the four hole cards represent in essence a four harness weave, with all the design possibility that this implies. In addition, there are at least two things that the four "harnesses" of cards can do that your four harness loom cannot do except with great difficulty. It is possible to move the warp around freely as you weave by "shuffling" the cards. It is also possible to vary the pattern in different parts of the weave by turning groups of cards in different directions. The resulting effect is as if you could (without double treading) have the left side of your weaving develop as if you were treading 1-2-3-4 while the right side shows the pattern that would result from 4-3-2-1 treading; messy to do on the floor loom but easy enough with cards.



Card weaving with two way turning and shuffling patterns.

Belt width is the most common way of working with cards, but pieces three to five feet wide have been done successfully, and without great difficulty. All that is necessary is a rigid structure upon which to spread the warp, such as a large canvas stretcher or your floor or frame loom. Cards are turned a handful at a time. The process is certainly no slower than tapestry, and probably faster.

The project described here was chosen to explore one of the unique possibilities of cardweaving: two way turning. The threading diagram is as follows:

18 cards
Warp length 2 yds or more
X = 32 ends
O = 40 ends

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| A | O | O | X | X | O | O | X | X | O | O | X | X | O | O | X | X | O | O |
| B | O | O | X | X | O | O | X | X | O | O | X | X | O | O | X | X | O | O |
| C | O | X | X | O | O | X | X | O | O | X | X | O | O | X | X | O | O | O |
| D | O | X | O | O | X | X | O | O | X | X | O | O | X | X | O | O | X | O |

With a pencil, number your cards 1 - 18, to help you if you drop the pile. Color the corners of all the cards with a different color for "A" corners, "B" corners, etc. To thread, hold the card so that it faces left. Thread all cards from left to right as shown in the diagram by the arrows. Draw the ends through 10-12 inches and tie them in a firm overhand knot (so they can't slip back out) and lay the card face down. Pile subsequent cards on top as you finish threading them.

When all cards are threaded, tie the knotted ends firmly together and attach them to a fixed point (doorknob, clamp, etc.). Slide the cards back up against the knots for the moment so they can't flop around. Then comb out your warp. When you feel it is reasonably well combed out, begin to slide the cards towards you, combing out as needed, until the cards are at the other end of the warp. When you feel satisfied with the tension, tie the ends in an overhand knot. Turn the warp so that the cards face left. You are ready to weave.

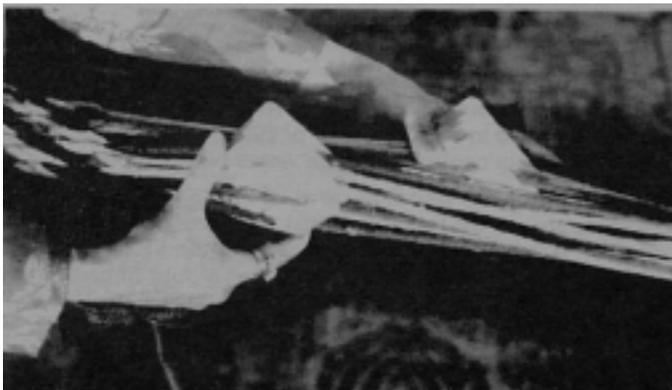
Check to see that all of the cards are lined up properly. The coloring of the corners should make this very easy, and you will immediately know it if one or two cards do not turn or turn too far.

Before inserting the weft, turn four or more times to spread out the warp. One turn means, actually, 1 quarter turn; that is it will take four turns to return to the position you started from. To turn forward means to turn as if the cards were rolling away from you up the warp; if the turning cards were a wheel and you were "riding" it, you would be going forward. To turn backward means the turning cards are rolling back toward you. After turning, slide the cards back and forth to open your shed.

Insert the weft and begin weaving. Weave by turning the cards forward continuously, inserting the weft after each quarter turn, until you have at least two to three inches woven. Then you are ready to begin two way turning to create a diagonal pattern change.

Separate out the solid color edge card and the first two pattern cards on the extreme right. Slide this group farther away from you on the warp so that the groups are separated. After this be careful to handle the groups separately. Turn the right hand group backwards one turn, and the left hand group forward one turn. Pass the weft through. You will note that the color of the corners of the two groups is now out of phase.

Turn the right hand group backwards again, and the left hand group forward, again passing the weft through. You will note that on this second turn the color of the corners are back in phase between the two groups once more. This is your signal to take two cards from the left hand group and add them to the right hand group.



Turning the two groups of cards.

Continue in this fashion; the cards on the right turning back and the ones of the left forward. After every two turns the left hand group decreases by two cards and the right hand group increases, until all cards are turning backwards.

If you wish, you can then reverse the process, or you can, after a few turns, begin turning all the cards forward again, and then proceed as before.

What if you make a mistake? Check to find out where you were last by rotating one or two cards to see what opens the shed, NOT by rotating all the cards. If you put your work down in the middle of a diagonal, stop at a point where the color corners are out of phase, and you will be able to distinguish the groups when you come back. Coloring the corners is crucial to making this technique easy.

Choosing materials? Avoid single ply and weak yarns. Although with experience you can handle almost any yarn, the easiest to handle are non-fuzzy, non-stretchy (VERY important) and strong. Many mill ends work well, as does perle cotton and rya.

Calculating warp length! Add desired finished length, 1/3 desired finished length (take up), and 18 inches waste.

Happy Weaving and Experimenting,
Charlotte Miller

Correction: The photo on the October Swatch page labelled chenille with tabby spacing is actually a photograph of velvet, which will be featured in the February Swatch Page.