

Spin and Weave the WoolWench Way

**A Project Course in Spinning
and Weaving without
rules or patterns**

aka 'Bring My Imagining Out!'

Spin and Weave the WoolWench Way

Published by FiberyGoodness
42 McDonald St
New Zealand

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Introduction

What follows is a short, project based course on spinning and weaving without rules or patterns. The focus is on making 'art', which to me (WoolWench) is all about taking a theme, a concept, or a story, and bringing it to life as a tangible object in both our yarns and our weaving.

Spinning to a theme with the intent to weave the resulting yarns, means that the entire design process can be followed right through the project, giving your art work a cohesiveness and holistic 'thread' (!) that holds it all together and strengthens the way your concept is expressed.

Within this course you will learn techniques for shaping your abstract ideas into something concrete and tangible, and to express your ideas without the constraints of rules or technique limitations. We will open the doors and draw from any medium, materials, and techniques that will work to enhance and bring to life your concepts in your spinning and weaving.

We will cover the following:

Spinning:

- The principles of art yarn
- Planning your yarns to a theme (this will be the same theme we use for the weaving)
- Fiber choices and Fiber prep for textured yarns
- Techniques for spinning and plying textured yarns plus practice exercises
- Yarn recipes - spinning yarns to weave in freeform designs, spin your choices.

Weaving:

- The principles of freeform weaving the WoolWench Way
- Overcoming the barriers to free forming
- Developing a 'stable' of weaving techniques to draw from

PROJECT

Weave a themed wall hanging using the following program:

- Planning and design - mind mapping your weaving plan (no patterns!)
- Choosing your yarns according to your plan and basic weaving requirements
- Warping your loom for art yarn
- Plain weave, using your yarns for effect
- Techniques for creating forms and shapes
- Drawing from other media, crochet, tapestry cross stitch and embroidery to create deliberate design elements
- Finishing your weaving

You Will Need:

If you have a choice of **spinning wheels**, choose the one with the largest orifice! We will also cover 'micro art yarns' too so don't worry if you don't have a large or delta orifice wheel.

Any kind of **rigid heddle loom** - you can also use a floor loom, just thread it for 2 shaft plain weave.

Fiber: Find a good variety of fibers and preparations. Your stash for this workshop should include:

1. Fine wools in both un-carded form and combed top.
2. A selection of locks such as Mohair, Wensleydale, Teeswater, or Gotland.
3. Medium fibers in un-carded form and/or carded roving or batts

We will spend a bit of time on fibre prep because that is so important to the yarn you want to spin, so make sure you have any or all of your fibre tools available for the project. If you have no fibre tools that is also ok, you shouldn't have any problem sourcing any of the fibre preparations we will be using.

Core spinning yarn - this should be not too thick and it should be 'grabby' so not smooth or slick. I prefer to use wool rather than cotton as wool is more forgiving of any extra twist that is likely to occur in corespinning. You can choose your own add ins as we go, this is very open in terms of design and your yarn and weaving will be very different from everyone else's, there are no limitations on what you choose to add into your projects at any stage.

Choose a black or dark coloured warp thread that is not too thick, we want to create a weft faced weaving, so your warp should be much thinner than your weft yarns.

Part One: The WoolWench Principles of Art Yarn

What is art? And then, what is art yarn?! Some people may say it is nothing more than badly spun yarn, or even 'beginners' yarn, others may say it has to be super complex, bulky and ultra textured.

Maybe it's both, or neither, or something of everything, it could actually be anything to anybody! I have spent a lot of time thinking about this, and for me, 'art' yarn needs to contain an element of 'art', which I would consider to be *self expression* of some kind.

I am not suggesting that EVERY yarn we ever spin should be 'art' or that it need have any kind of expressive intention behind it, everyone loves to simply spin for the sake of spinning. However when we want to intentionally create something that has a message, a theme, or an idea behind it, that is the point when we move from creating a crafted product into creating art.

I have developed a threefold approach that contains what I consider to be the driving principles behind creating an 'art' yarn (and continues on into your weaving):

1. **Concept (inspiration)**
2. **Design (construction)**
3. **Technique (execution)**

I believe that if your yarn making contains these three elements in your creation process, then you are making 'art'. Lets look at each of these elements.

Concept

A concept is the underlying idea that drives your design and all your design choices. Your art yarn should show a relationship to a theme or concept, and be driven by that central idea using colour, texture, and specific constructions and techniques to execute it, chosen to represent elements of that theme.

For example, an architectural theme could be expressed in a layered defined construction, such as a cable ply with and autowrap on each single. The yarn pictured to the right was created to express the idea of a brick building, layers of colour forming a solid architectural mass. I used the white autowrap during the plying of the two ply to create the 'mortar' and straight lines. I wanted a yarn that would look constructed, regular, complex, and colourful!



Or to express a softer nature theme you might choose to do that through the use of un-carded locks and loose plying, softer colours and a more flowing movement in the fibers along the yarn.

Each element of the yarn design such as colour, fibre choice, spinning techniques should be directly related to the theme. My 'nature' yarn on the right looks very different to my 'architecture' yarn on the previous page, you can see how using concepts and ideas to drive your yarn design can quickly get you out of the spinning rut we all fall into of creating the same yarns over and over!



Design

This brings us to the next part of this approach, design. In this workshop, for both spinning and weaving, we will be basing our work on the theme: **'Seasons'**.

I have chosen this theme because it is flexible and allows for many different interpretations. You could choose to keep it simple, for example using autumn colours such as rust, gold, and browns, and create earthy textures, add in dried leaves and twigs to make a beautiful representation of Autumn. Or you could take it to a more abstract level and consider the idea of 'change' and transformation, what happens between the seasons, perhaps using graduated yarns and creating smooth to textured surfaces. Do not feel overwhelmed at this stage because the first part of our process will be refining and focussing your design!



For your art yarn to really represent and express your ideas, you need to make appropriate choices in terms of fibre selection and techniques in relation to the design. So long as you allow the theme or concept to fully guide your choices you can be confident that your design will be consistent and embody your ideas for you.

This will really help you to 'not' be spinning the same yarn all the time, because all of us, when unsupervised and left to our own devices will eat all the cookies in the cookie jar. I mean... will make the same choices each time.



For example, I always go for greens and purples in my colour choices, they are my default colours! I usually go for carded batts for my fiber prep because I can create a whole yarn in one batt, and I do love to spiral ply my yarns with a thread.. This is my 'go-to' yarn! I would spin this every time if I wasn't consciously working at creating variety in my spinning. The way I do this is to give myself themes and ideas to work on and direct my choices with, if my theme is different each time, I can't help making different yarns!

During your design process we will start by literally 'mapping out' and refining your concept, and expand that into specific colour, materials, and technique choices that are appropriate to the theme and will best reflect your concept and interpretation of the theme. Think of yourself as a fiber art cartographer, an explorer and map maker creating your own pathways and steps to reach your final destination.



It is during the design stage that we remove any irrelevant additions that don't reflect the concept well or don't quite 'fit' (or may lead to a different destination). Your final design will reveal what you have discovered about the techniques you have chosen to create specific effects, textures, and the interplaying of colours.

I have adapted the process of mind mapping for yarn design and weaving, I will focus on a technique that will help you turn an 'abstract' (idea) into a 'concrete' tangible object (your actual yarn). This method will provide you with a self created guide throughout your yarn making (and weaving) process, so even though we are not using a 'recipe' for your yarn, or a 'pattern' for your weaving, it is very much a planned and deliberate process for which you have created your own direction and intention.

It is this process that gives your project visible design elements that create cohesiveness and direction, and that allows you to express your ideas, turning your work from a beautiful craft into a layered and complex art.

Image on this page: Carta marina, a wallmap of w:Scandinavia, by Olaus Magnus. The caption reads : Marine map and Description of the Northern Lands and of their Marvels, most carefully drawn up at Venice in the year 1539 through the generous assistance of the Most Honourable Lord Hieronymo Quirino.

Technique

To make an excellent 'art yarn', your yarn construction should show mastery of the techniques you have chosen to create your design with. This may well mean that you need to do lots of practice with the techniques until you reach a stage where you are so comfortable with this technique that you can 'play' with it, change it, know what will happen if you use it on different kinds of fibers, be able to predict what it will do if you make it thick instead of thin, or use a fluffy preparation instead of a smooth combed one, and how you can balance it.

This in itself is a process!

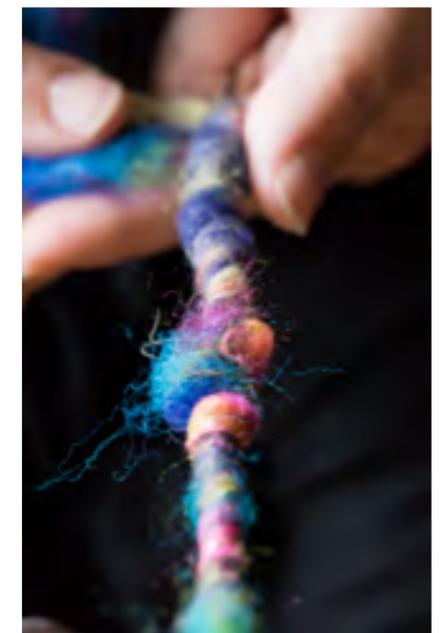
It may be that you are already doing all of this but hadn't given thought to your own processes and skills! We will work on some specific exercises during this course which will lead you into an unconscious mastery of techniques. We will imagine ourselves as musicians, and our wheels and fibers as our instruments and notes. It takes practice to play a symphony, because familiarity is the key, understanding how the wheel works, how the fibers can be manipulated and having it become as natural as breathing!



Corespinning basic



Corespinning for Colour



Corespinning for texture

Once you have developed a 'stable' of techniques you can call upon and know well, you can draw from this when you start to consider your design and the techniques you will use for it, you will already know exactly how to achieve the music you want, which key to play it in and what strings to pluck! In other words, once you have your design in your head, you will almost intuitively know how to create it, which fibers to choose, and how you will spin it.

'Technique' includes a solid understanding of how to use and manipulate twist, your yarn should have the appropriate amount of twist at each stage to create a stable and balanced construction. Some people may suggest that art yarn does not need to be balanced and stable, that this is part of the 'art', and in fact I do agree with this, but it must be intentionally unbalanced or unstable. It has to be designed that way deliberately and for a reason that reflects your theme or yarn concept. So in general, and for this course, we will first aim at making balanced art yarns that can be 'used' easily in the weaving we will follow with.

Once you have mastered balanced art yarn, then you can start mastering un-balancing it!

Now we have covered the three main aspects of my approach to creating art yarn, it is time to get started!

Here is a detailed weekly plan of what we will be doing:

Week 1: Mind Mapping your yarn design

I will share a video with you to show you the process plus a document with written instructions to get you started, there is also a Mind Map Template you can use so you don't start out with that dreaded blank page!

I will also share some yarn 'recipes' with you to help you choose techniques for spinning the yarns you will need for your project. In this course we will focus on Corespinning, as this is a wonderful foundation technique that you can build upon in myriad ways to create different effects in both texture and colour.

Nesxt you will gather your supplies and start your fibre preparation if needed (card, comb etc)

Week 2: Start spinning!

This week you will be referring to your Corespinning module and working on as many ways as you can dream up of spinning with a core. You may also of course work on other yarn techniques and recipes that you need to express your ideas in your yarn (and subsequently in your weaving).

I will be available to help you with questions and troubleshooting your yarns as needed. Hopefully this week you will spin enough yarn to start your weaving next week! And don't worry, you can suppliment your weaving yarns with other handspuns or commercial spin yarns from your stash, you don't need to spin enough this week to make your weaving exclusively from course - spun yarn!

Week 3: Mind mapping your weaving design

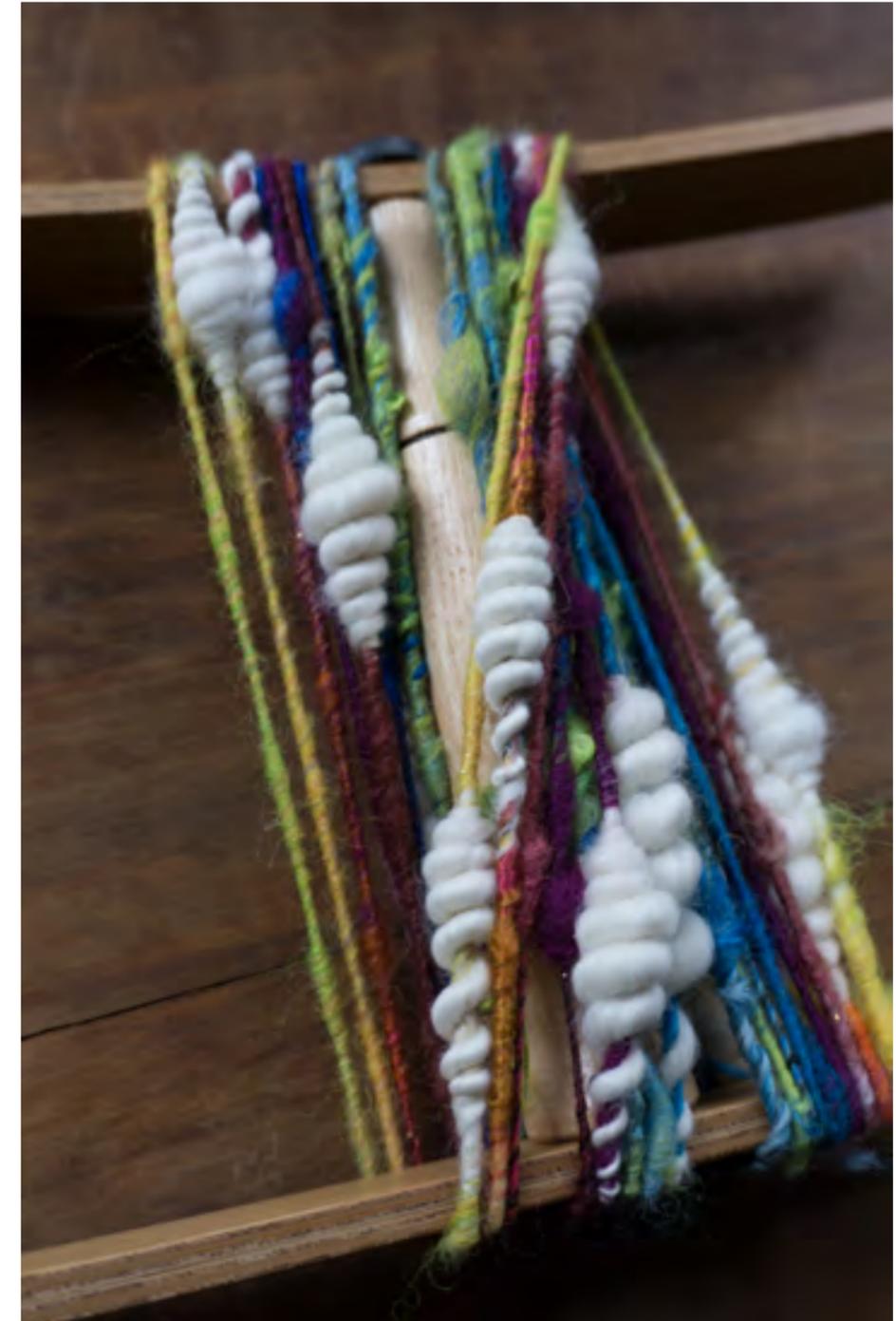
I will provide a document for you with more details on my approach to freeform weaving, this includes a multi-disciplinary approach to design elements. We will be aiming at making at a small wall hanging on our 'Seasons' theme, but you can also choose to make a shawl, or a series of wall hangings, or a table runner.. there is no restriction on your choice but if you are not sure what to aim at creating focus on the wall hanging project for this course.

Selecting the yarns you will need (you already have your 'art yarns' spun but will need additional yarns for the weaving)

Warp your loom. We will be warping for 'plain' or 'tabby' weave, so through every slot and hole in your rigid heddle, or select and warp through two shafts on your shafted floor or table loom. I will also give you the link to my video resource on direct warping if you need help getting your loom ready or are interested in trying this quick and easy way to do it!

Week 4: Completing the weaving!

Attaching add ins and using different techniques for creating design elements in your weaving. During this part of the course I will share some specific techniques you can try out to help you shape and complete your weaving. Within the bounds of your 'map' you will still be able to try out and experiement with different ways to use your yarn in your weft, and ways to create specific effects in your design.



Mind Mapping your Design

Week One Task:

Watch a video and start your mind map

I hope by now you have read through the introduction and the information about my approach to art yarns.

Now its time to start getting down to business! We have our theme chosen (Seasons) but how do you go from this rather abstract concept and turn it into something tangible?

We need some kind of a 'bridge', a pathway that will let us span that rather large gap between idea and execution. This is often where spinners will get stuck, unable to get past what might appear to be something of a chasm, its easy to fall into the most obvious road of colour and texture without really exploring the dea as deeply and richly as it could be.

Of course most likely many of your choices WILL be based on which colours and which textures can best represent your ideas (and rightly so), but in order to really make this Season yarn your own, to add something of yourself into it beyond the most obvious choices and to create a yarn that will stand out against a potential sea of other peoples lockspun rusts and pale greens and golds, you need to really examine exactly what this theme means to you personally.

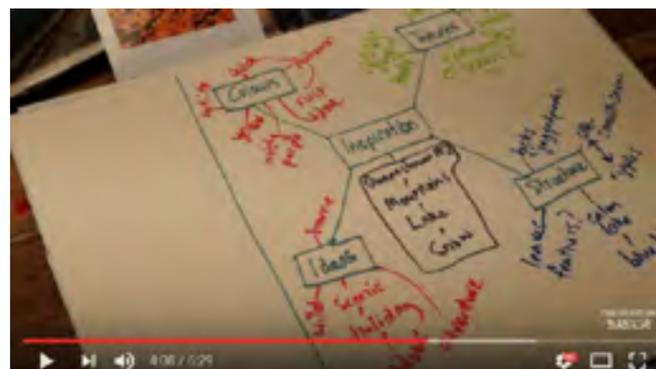
This is where the mind mapping process comes into its own! Mind mapping is a fantastic method for studying and exam swatting, for developing a project, and planning and structuring an idea. It can also be very nicely applied to the world of the fibre artist! This process will help you really expand on your basic idea, it should help you find greater depth and detail as well as help you refine your ideas and distill them into specific design elements that you will use in your yarns (and later your weaving).

I use this technique because it helps me:

- explore a subject or inspiration on several levels
- organise my some5mes chaotic thoughts
- identify the different elements that I think will be important to the design
- get unstuck when I am not sure how to approach my inspiration subject
- create a story in my design

Please pop over to YouTube and watch my Yarn Mapping Video:

<https://youtu.be/KcwfpOdawD8>



This video demonstrates the process step by step. What follows in this document are some extra thoughts and instructions.

Mapping your Mind, the Practical Stuff

There are a couple of really important things to keep in mind when doing this task. The process and the plan are the goals, not making a pretty mind map or something that looks planned itself. Think about your brain, how it works.. all those neurons and pathways linking them up. Thats what a mind map is, the connection of ideas that together make something you 'know'. It might be chaotic, messy, have extra bits squeezed in here and there because you thought of them aHer. It will have scribbles, lines going all over the place. Its all good.

The real goal is thinking about your inspiration and how to represent that, not in a mind map, but in your yarn. So do not expect yourself to create a mind map work of art, use that piece of paper to get the ideas out of your head and shaped up to spin!

Here are the steps I follow, and you will see this during the video.

1. **In the centre of the paper, write the name of the inspiration.** In this case it is 'Seasons' but outside of this workshop in your own practice it could be a place, a person, an emotion, doesn't matter, write it down.

2. **Write down your 'categories'**, these are like sub-headings around your inspiration, link them to the main block with a line between. Most likely with yarn design you will choose categories such as 'colour', 'texture', 'ideas or concepts' and 'structure'. You might also want to add in an 'impressions' section to do some word associations around the theme and see where they lead to, or you might want to allow the space to draw sketches or use colours blocks to trigger your ideas. There are no rules and you shouldn't feel restricted to the basic ones I am showing you in the video.

3. **Start adding ideas to each category**, these do not all need to be included in your yarn design, right now you are just looking for a bit of a brainstorm around each category. For example -for colour, find a palette that represents your inspiration and write the individual colour names down, or paint the colours onto your mindmap, or use paint chips. 'Texture' is all about the kinds of textures you see in your inspiration, these ideas will be the starting point for thinking about what materials and fibres to choose as well as how to spin them, so think about this a while, what do you see in your inspiration, think about how it 'feels' as well as how it looks. This sectoon will help you choose your materials.

In the **structure** section you can expand on the textures you identified, start translating them into materials, for example, in my video, I identified jagged peaks, and thought a good structure for that could be using long uncarded locks, but I could have also considered how I might make a crisscrossing effect with my plying, or even how to make 'mountains' with a thick and thin yarn. This section will give you your spinning and ply technique ideas and you should be able to start refining them into specific techniques you could use.

The **'ideas'** section includes impressions and concepts you want to incorporate, for example I thought of 'wild' and 'adventure' representing my inspiration, so my yarn will be a bit uncontrolled and crazy to represent that. I can link that up with the use of the locks, and adding extra plies.

4. Once you have all your 'categories' expanded on you can start to see your design ideas as a whole, each aspect part of the complete picture, yet in more detail than a general 'thought' you might normally start spinning with. Usually the process of mind mapping itself brings up a whole bunch of ideas I wouldn't have otherwise thought of.

5. Spend a bit of time with your mind map, looking at the categories are you starting to get some connections happening between each one? While I was doing my video I developed the understanding that in fact, I had three different aspects within this one yarn that I wanted to bring together - the lake itself, blue and big and calm, the surrounding mountains with their wild snow capped peaks, and within that the golden autumn leaves on the trees that grow between the lake and the mountains.

You will see in the video what materials choices I made related to the structure section. Then I put it all together into a spinning plan. This is a much more cohesive and deliberate plan than I would have been able to come up with if I hadn't used the mindmap. That yarn would have been probably the same colours, but more impressionistic, less constructed.

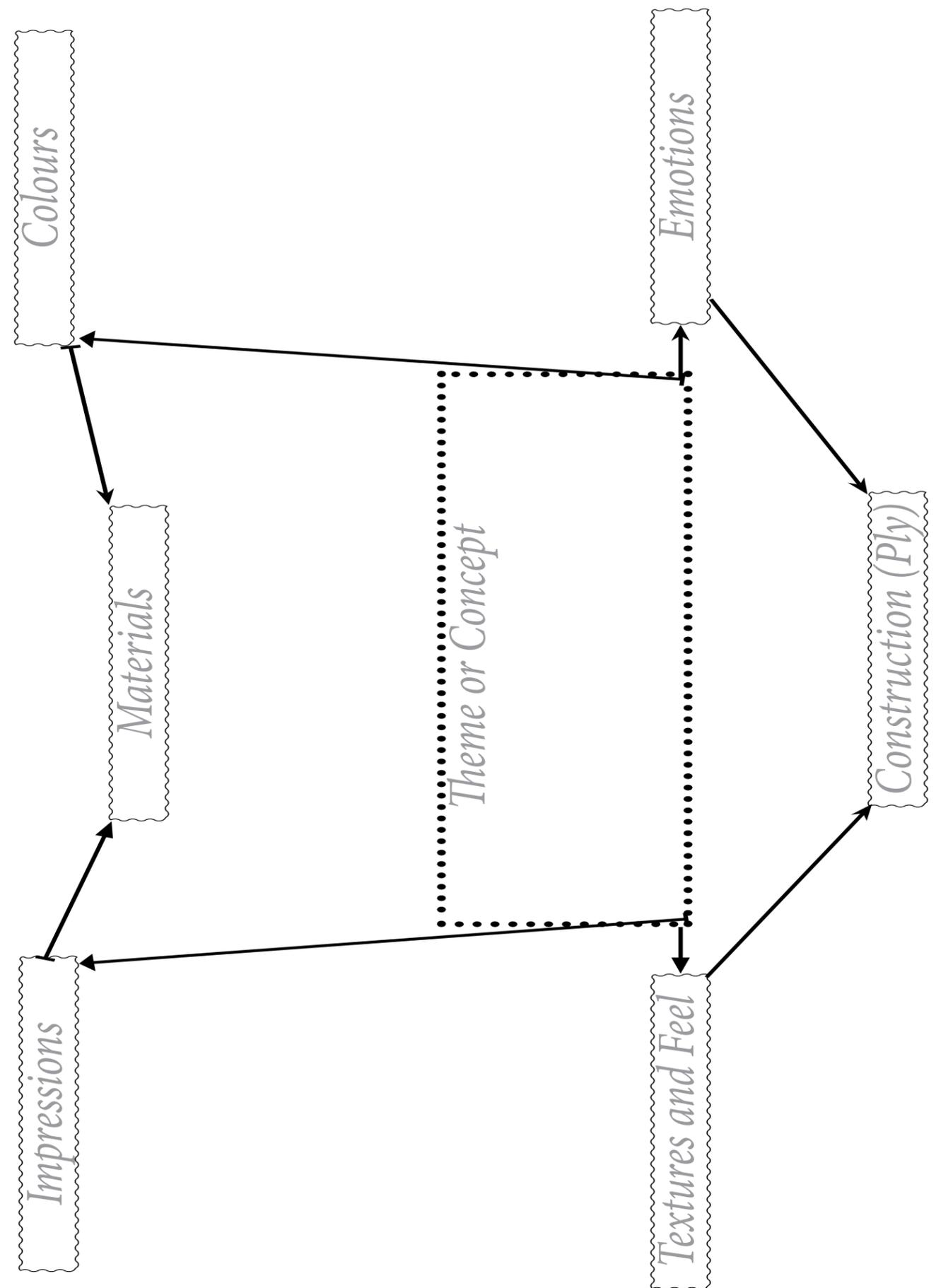
Are you resisting Mind Mapping?

Of course I understand that not everyone likes to plan, to map, or to pre-think their fiber art creating! But I would like to encourage you to try this method out and see what you think of it! This is not something I suggest you use on 'every' yarn you ever make from now on! But it is a great starting point to help you get your own ideas out of the box and expanded into areas you may not have considered when first thinking about what you will spin for your theme.

In terms of the actual spinning, this method also helps with the essential forward planning of some of the crucial elements of multi-ply yarns, and that is knowing when to add extra twist! If you have pre-planned your design, you will never end up with a yarn that's falling apart because you decided halfway through to add another ply.

This will also help you create cohesive art yarns that really tell a story for you!

Use the template on the following page to get started!



By the end of Week One:

- You should have a mind map completed of your yarn - we will repeat this exercise in Week 3 for your Weaving design, so if you have any questions please let me know straight away
- You should also work on collecting up all the fibers and materials you will need for your yarn, guided by your mind map. It may be that your plan has to be altered and adapted if some materials are unavailable, but you can do that within the mind map and know you are still on track even if you need to substitute fibers or change your threads for plying etc.
- You should have a plan of your yarn, including what textures and colours you want to include. The goal is that you are going to spin your yarn/s next week. We will focus on corespinning as a basic art yarn technique that you can build on in many different ways to achieve very different kinds of yarns. I recommend you master corespinning (if you haven't already) so you can really start to play with variations of it in your creations.

However if there are other techniques you need to focus on to make your yarn look the way you want it to, feel free to draw from any other sources you can for other techniques that may better express your ideas! You should also feel free to contact me (Suzy) any time if you need help with your spinning!



Week 2: Corespinning



Week 2

Corespinning Exercise

This week is spinning week! If you are new to spinning 'art' or 'expressive' yarns, I will suggest an exercise for you to get you started. One of the goals for this workshop is to create at least one yarn that will add texture and interest into the weaving we will be working on next. This should match with your design concept in terms of colour and construction. One technique that I strongly suggest you learn and practice (it usually takes much practice to get this 'right') is corespinning. You can adapt this to fit your theme (Seasons) by choosing fibers and colours that will work with your design, and choosing if you will then spin this smooth or textured, and then choosing how you will ply it. This tutorial offers you technique interaction and is accompanied by a video demonstration of those techniques.

You can access the video from this link:

<https://vimeo.com/163986961/dff9892603> (this is a private link for this workshop so I would appreciate if you do not share it)

Corespinning is one of the most useful constructions when spinning art yarns for the following reasons:

- It provides stability and strength to spun fibers that would otherwise lack that stability.
- It is a great way to use multi colour fibers while avoiding the 'barber pole' look
- If you have a limited quantity of fiber it uses less fibre to get more yardage
- You can vary the texture and spin it smooth or 'lockspun', flat, or fluffy, or all of those things in one yarn!
- It adds another dimension to your project because your spun fibers wrap widthwise around the yarn rather than run lengthwise along it

Keep in mind however, when planning your projects, that the nature of a corespun yarn is it will not have a great deal of 'memory' or stretch in the length of it, this makes it ideal for weaving, and it is great for projects such as cowls, bags, cushions etc, but if you were to make a garment such as a jersey entirely from corespun you would find it would end up sagging and would not retain its shape well.

I tend to use corespun as highlights in larger projects because of this, or for smaller crocheted or woven cowls and scarves, also wall hangings! Also if you are planning on using your smooth corespun for anything that will get a lot of wear, such as a jacket or a bag, if you do not 'finish' this yarn well with a slight 'fulling' then you may find it will pill easier than a traditionally spun yarn.

Finish your yarn with a good soak and enough agitation to very slightly felt the surface to give it better stability for that kind of project.



Corespinning basics

Core Thread: Choose a core thread that is strong. This will provide the strength in your yarn, if it snaps easily your yarn will also snap easily and the entire yarn will fall apart.

Choose a yarn that is not smooth or slippery, something that will grab onto your fibers easily will make your spinning more enjoyable!

Choose a yarn that is not too thick, thin yarns are much more forgiving of the extra twist they will gather as you spin them into the core.

I usually recommend a commercial mohair for this purpose, this can often be found quite cheap on cones and fulfills all my requirements for core threads!

If you can't find this then look for any commercial spun yarn that is plied and not too 'bouncy' or thick. I usually go for 'cheap', like these giant cones of 100% wool yarn (right) which I found in the thrift store for less than \$10 each, and will last a very long time!

Essentially anything can be used for core thread but when you are learning you need to give yourself every chance of success, some yarns can be very difficult and leave you in a tangled mess of overtwisted knots! I would avoid crochet cotton too, as again, this is not at all forgiving of any extra twist and will become hard and kink up very quickly.



Fiber Choice:

What you choose to spin around your core can vary and is entirely dependant on your yarn design and the kind of yarn you want to spin.

You could choose intact locks for great texture (and this is a great place to start for your first corespun as it lends itself well to this technique). You could choose picked 'fluffy' locks for a loose textured look. You could choose commercial top for a smoothed look (and I can share some tricks to make this very smooth indeed), or you could choose carded roving or a batt for a light airy look.

For your first corespinning I would suggest either intact locks for a very textured effect, or a carded prep, which is open and very easy to draft compared to top.

Ease of drafting is important because you need to start by just getting comfortable with the technique, without worrying about also having to draft fibers that want to fight you! If you really need a smooth yarn for your theme design I would suggest at least pre-drafting your top to make that part easier in your spinning.



Plying choices

I am adding this information now, rather than after you have already made your single corespun, because plying needs to be considered always before you start spinning so you know how much twist you will need and when you need to add it.

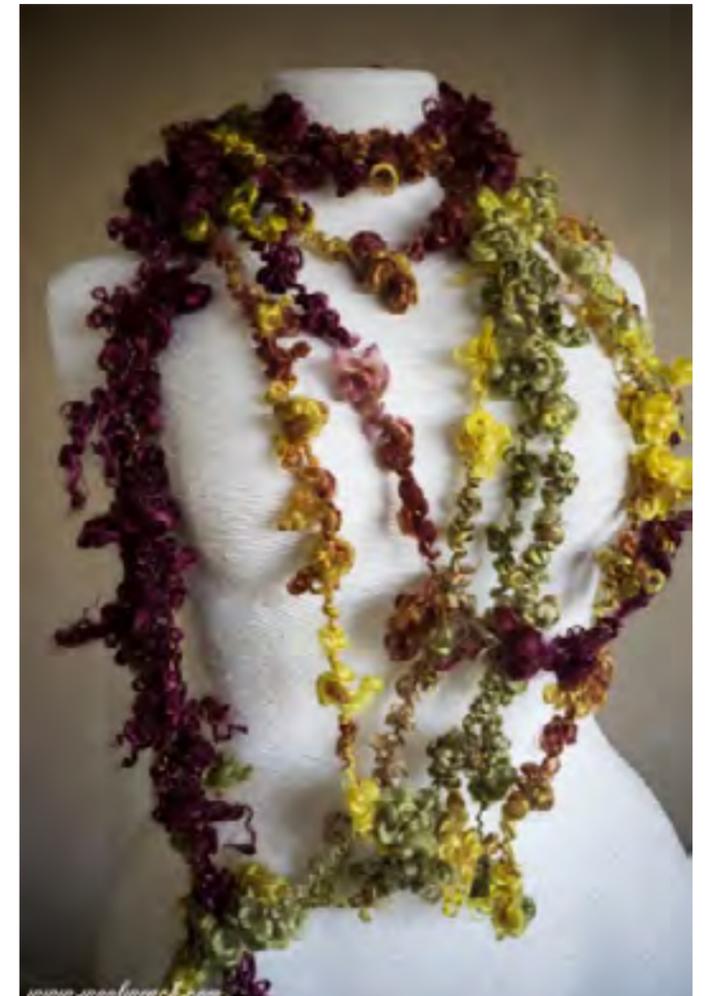
I almost always ply my corespun yarns (in fact I rarely spin any singles of any kind) simply because I like balanced yarns. Any single, by its very nature, will not be balanced because all the twist in the single is going in one direction.

This holds very true also for corespun singles. You will always gain twist as you spin, and your single will always have twist in one direction. As you learn to corespun you may well find that you actually have far too much twist and your yarn is very kinked and curly! This is because in effect you are taking an already balanced yarn (your core) and adding twist to it, holding it back from getting on the bobbin long enough to wrap all those fibers around it horizontally! Because it can take some time to get those fibers wrapped, the length of time you are holding it back creates greater opportunity for that twist to build up, often actually travelling back down your core yarn to your supply, causing all kinds of undesirable things to happen...

The GOOD news is that, IF this happens it will only happen as you are learning! This is one of those techniques where the only real 'trick' is to keep practicing! As your hands and feet learn this new yarn they will continue to work in a faster and more coordinated way, and after a while you will definitely notice a reduction in the amount of extra twist you are getting in your corethread. Stick with it, you WILL get it!

And the last thing to remember - the spin police will not come and inspect your yarn, you can break your core thread at any time, remove the extra twist, knot it back together and keep corespinning over it, unless you are spinning very fine, that knot will become invisible inside the yarn and you can continue without needing to do battle with the kinks! baKle with the kinks!

Please watch the following video demonstration. I would suggest you briefly read through the instructions below first, then watch the video. Once you have seen it, go back and read the instructions again before you start spinning. Remember practice is the real key for successful lockspinning! Corespinning Demonstration (<https://vimeo.com/163986961/dff9892603>)





Spinning

Attach your leader as usual, and then attach your core thread to the leader, a knot will be fine.

Hold your core thread so it runs across your palm and through your hand, do not wrap it around your hand or your fingers as that will cause you to hold on to it for too long and too much twist will build up. The goal is to get the tension set up on your wheel as well as you can to start with, so it will gently draw the core thread from your hand and onto the bobbin, allowing you the time you need to draft your fiber and let it wrap, while not dawdling so much that it will kink up.

It is worth spending some time treadling and adjusting your wheel (let the core thread run onto the bobbin as you do this) to get it set up the best you can for this kind of spinning. You should always have enough tension and take up to allow the yarn onto the bobbin without over twisting and kinking up, you should have continuous take up and consistent tension on the core yarn at all times.

Wheel Setup: As a general rule for most wheels you should expect to be using the middle sized or largest whorl for a medium amount of twist. If you don't get enough twist your fiber won't wrap well enough and it will stay loose. You should also expect to have much more

tension or brake applied than you do for a normal single, as you need your take up to be stronger than usual.

Once you have your wheel set up:

Start treadling to build up some twist into the leader and into the start of your core thread. You will know when you have enough twist because if you now hold the Bps of your fiber supply touching onto the core thread you will see it start to grab onto the core as the twist begins to catch it.

Keeping your fiber supply at a right angle to your core thread, allow that fiber to wrap around it.



If you are spinning to create a fluffy textured yarn you can just let it make its own way around that core thread, if you are spinning to create a smooth yarn you can take your forefinger of the hand holding the thread and press it up against the fiber as it wraps around to smooth it against the core.

So you should have your first fiber around the core, don't get too excited, treadle slowly!!

Now it is time to draft out some more fiber, and you will now be very pleased you have this loose, easy to draft supply! What you need to do is reach around the core thread with the forefinger and thumb of the hand holding the thread (you are still guiding it across your palm). Keeping your fiber supply still at a right angle to the core thread, pinch your fiber with your thumb and forefinger of your thread holding hand and draft it back with your fiber supply hand, and you have your next staple ready to wrap around the core.

Do not draft this fiber far enough to separate it from the supply but stop drafting when it starts to thin. Remember that you do not need to have a lot of fiber to cover your core, but you need enough to make a solid layer around the core.

Judging just how much you will need to draft out for the kind of yarn you want to make is a matter of experience, so while you are learning, practice drafting varying amounts at a time and observe the effect this creates in your spun single.

Keep treadling and guide the fiber around the core thread, moving along the core thread as it feeds steadily into the bobbin. As you work you will develop a 'feel' for how much to draft, when to move your hands, and how you best prefer to have your wheel set up. Some people prefer more tension and a stronger grip on the core yarn, others (like me) prefer to have an even steady pace and a light hold on the core thread, using your hand more as a guide than a restraint.

If you want to lockspin, rather than 'drafting' the fibers you will want to open them only just enough to allow some to catch and hold on the core, remember the more you draft, the smoother your yarn will become, so if you want a very 'locky' yarn with maximised texture, allow the fibers to take their own form and do not open them out before they wrap around the core. Conversely, to make a smooth yarn, draft your fibers well, allowing them to stretch and smooth before you wrap them around the core.

Keep spinning your yarn until you have made as much as you want to!

When you let go of your core yarn you will want to secure it so it cannot just unravel, this will cause your corespun fibers to loosen around the core more than you would want, be sure to fasten the end or keep the tension on it until you have finished.

You can wind your yarn off onto a niddy noddy, keeping the tension on it still, and take it straight from the niddy noddy to 'finish' by setting the twist - I do this by soaking it for a few minutes in very hot water (this will relax the fibers) and then dropping it straight into cold water (this will tighten the fibers back up and help them hold onto each other). Hang to dry.

Don't worry if there is twist in this skein, you can expect from a quarter twist in the skein to even a complete twist on a well spun corespun single. Keep this in mind when you are using it, that twist will remain energised and influence whatever you make with it, although in my opinion anything a half turn or less in a finished skein will not make any difference in your project when using this generally heavier lockspin style of yarn.

I prefer to ply my corespun yarns however! I would normally do this with a thin thread. Your plying thread must be strong, and as it will be visible, it should match up with your fiber colours in a way that pleases you.

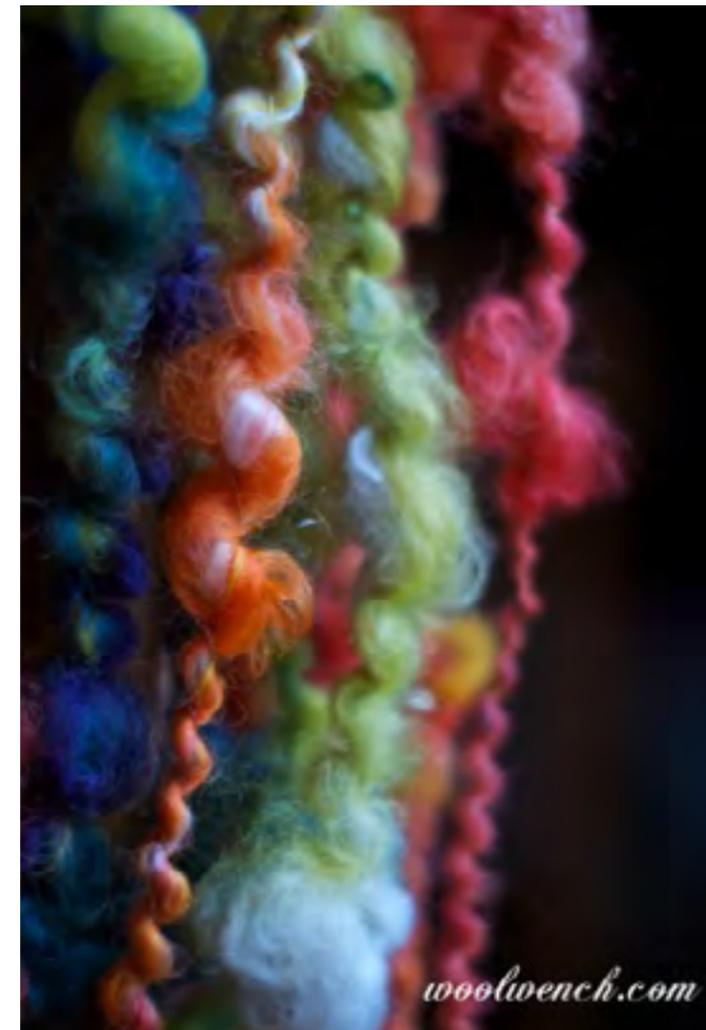
Do keep referring to the video so you can see the process and the rhythm that will help you learn this technique.

Plying

A great technique for these yarns is a 'spiral' ply, this will serve to emphasise and 'pop' the texture you have created in your single, and it will add a preky shell spiral design into your smooth spun singles, opening up the fibers and giving an airy look to your yarn.

Start by joining your thread and your single and attaching them to the leader. Ply in the opposite direction from the one you spun your single with. It is very important to keep the tension on your ply thread, holding it straight towards you from the orifice, and your single should come from the side.

When you have the correct angle for plying your core thread and your spun single will be somewhere between a 90 and a 45 degree angle, allowing the single to wrap around the thread in a gentle spiral shape.



If you do not have the correct angle for plying you will either end up with a yarn that looks more like a traditional two ply, or a coiled yarn. You can vary the angle however to add different shapes and textures along your yarn, you should play with this a bit and see what you like! Just remember you will generally need to keep the plying thread with more tension on it than the single, which is allowed to roll around it.

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PART TWO

If you have watched the video I made to accompany this tutorial, you will have seen the second variation on this technique in 'Part Two'. This is a smoother spun single using carded fiber to wrap around the core. This use of pre-prepared fibers means you will get a less textured single that will give you great options for plying to showcase different ply techniques. In the video I used a coil and then an Nply to create a very bulky yarn that would make a great addition to a project such as in a weaving, an border around a cushion or as an edging on a knit or crochet item. You can make these yarns as thick or thin as you like by varying the amount of fiber you draft around the core and by changing the number of ply steps you use.



One of the keys to making a smooth corespun yarn is the way you 'press' the fiber onto the core thread. You can use your index finger of the hand that holds the core thread to push the fiber onto the core, smoothing it as it wraps.

This is easy to do by simply lifting that hand higher than the orifice to create an angle around your finger. This forces the fiber between your finger and the core, effectively pressing and shaping it around the core as it wraps.

Alternatively, if you want to create a fluffy airy yarn you can do this the opposite way, by not touching the fiber at all once you have drafted it out, and letting it make its own way around the core.

I suggest you practice both these techniques, you can even do this within one yarn to create some interesting variations in texture! It is a very good exercise for learning how to manipulate your fibers to create the differences you want in it. Remember you are the boss! The fiber will do what you tell it to do, you just need to learn the ways you can control

the way it wraps around the core, and conscious practice, doing and observing, is the best way to gain this control.

You will also see in the video that when I am coiling I am continuing to use my hand as a guide to the thread rather than a brake. Again this is all in your wheel set up, getting the tension just right for drawing the yarn onto the bobbin. Do not be afraid to increase the tension a lot more for plying than you had it for spinning the single. There is now more weight in the yarn and the wheel has to work harder to draw it in. As your bobbin fills (unless you have a Majacraft Aura) you will most likely need to continue increasing that tension as the bobbin gets heavier. This is yet another aspect of your spinning that you need to practice, learning how to get what you need out of your spinning wheel.

You may find limitations there that you cannot overcome, for example a traditional scotch tension wheel may not give you the take up you really need to get these large yarns onto the bobbin, you may end up having to hand wind it on, but at least there will not be 100 metres of yarn ;) The other limitation is your orifice and guide hook size. You will need to plan ahead if you want to create multiple plied yarns, especially corespun yarns that tend to be much thicker than a normal spun single.

I would remind you here however, that once your yarn will no longer fit through the orifice of your wheel and you want to ply it again, your trusty spindle will still work well for this! There are quite a few larger sized spindles on the market that will be cheaper than buying another wheel just for the occasional art yarn spinning you might want to do, and a spindle has no orifice limitations, you will be amazed what you can ply! If you wanted to do a lot of art yarns then of course the best option is to find a wheel that will best suit your requirements.

I hope you have enjoyed experimenting with co-spinning! Remember that once you have mastered this technique you will be able to increase your range of textured and expressive yarns substantially! This can form the basis for a very wide range of yarns and it gives you more freedom to express yourself with fiber, keep practicing and observing your results, learn your wheel and your fibers and find the core threads that work for you, and most of all, have fun with your spinning!

By the end of week two:

You should have some yarns spun that you will use as features in your weaving, You should have also selected some other yarns from your stash that you think you would like to use with them in your weaving.



Week 3:

Prepare to Weave!



Weaving Freeform

Week Three: What is the WoolWench Way of Weaving freeform?

This week we have: An Example to explore, A Planning Task, Loom choice, Warp and Weft choices, Warping your Loom.

So here we are in the third week of the workshop and I hope you are ready to weave! I call this freeform weaving, really for want of a better term for it, because in actual fact the idea of 'freeform' indicates a high level of unplanned and fortuitous activity with a loom, when what 'I' am hoping to do with my weaving is use it to tell a story. This requires a plan! (ok ok so by now you probably know I love to plan!). I think of this plan as being something of a map or a guide, as opposed to the usual 'pattern' that traditional weaving generally uses. It means your weaving will be less spontaneous than a lot of the freeform weaving that we see, instead you will be looking for specific design elements to incorporate at specific times and places during your weaving, placement of those elements will be in your 'plan'. This will help you tell your story, which in this case is your 'Season' weaving!

We will use the same mind mapping technique you used in the first part of this workshop to plan your weaving. Your mind map will help you decide on what elements you will add into your weaving, how you will weave it, what colours, textures and materials you will choose, what techniques you will use, and you may even end up with a sketch of what you want it to look like. But remember, this IS freeform, having this mind mapped plan does not mean you cannot alter or add to it on the way, it is simply a guide so you know where to start and roughly what you will include.

You continue to be 'free' to create as you weave!

Another aspect of my approach to freeform weaving is that the tools and techniques you use are dynamic, wide ranging, and can be guided and led by the ideas you want to express. With this kind of weaving you are free to draw from any other art or craft to express your ideas, if you need to embroider or cross-stitch, crochet or knit into your warp, use tapestry techniques, feltwork, or traditional weaving patterns and techniques, you should feel free to draw from any and all mediums and techniques that will best express your ideas!

The goal is to create your theme or 'story' in whatever way you want to, unrestricted by 'labels' or ideas about what weaving is or isn't.

An example I would like to share with you is the weaving I made on my Majacraft Dynamic Heddle loom, I mention the type of loom here because it is a specific kind of loom, one that allows me to use various dent sizes in the reed and include thick and thin yarns in my warp design. You can in fact use ANY loom for this, and after we look at the first weaving example we will move on to talking about loom choice for this kind of weaving. In fact this section/file contains quite a lot of reading for you!

Before we start I wanted to explain what 'freeform' weaving is to me and my own personal approach to it. I feel we need to spend some time on it because what follows will not be a pattern or a set of step by step instructions for you to follow, simply because that would no longer BE freeform weaving! So the way you think about and approach this is critical to your production and hands on weaving in this workshop.

So here is a piece I created to tell a story, it is a simple story but one that had a significance with me that I wanted to include in my weaving. It is the story of a day at the beach, children and friends, the feeling of breathing in life and freedom that the ocean gives me, and the many treasures to be found on the shore.



As a whole I wanted something that would look cohesive and flowing, that would represent the colours of the ocean and the life within it. I chose the blues for that, also thinking of the sky that frames the sea. I then started to add in elements such as the sparkle that runs throughout it, not just to represent the sparkle of the sun on the water but also to tell the story of the special people who move through my life like a shining thread.

I had some small shells that I collected that day that of course needed to go into this piece! The story of the nature of life and death, the shell that is inhabited for a short time, that adorns the rocks and sea floor, and then is washed and smoothed and becomes something new again in my weaving.

These are also the treasures I collected during the day, moments in time in which they were discovered and touched and put in my pocket to bring out later so I could again enjoy the memories of the day. I scattered these through the weaving to help tell that story.



I created little features like (my favourite!) the sea anemone! This was a creature found in a rockpool and marvelled over, so graceful, and so reactive to its environment.



Another treasure and another memory! Even as I am writing about it I am enjoying that day over again!

This (right) is the wee limpet shell I picked up with a hole in it. The rock pools were absolutely teeming with life and colour, lichens and seaweeds, hard shelled crabs and pretty coloured stones and shells.

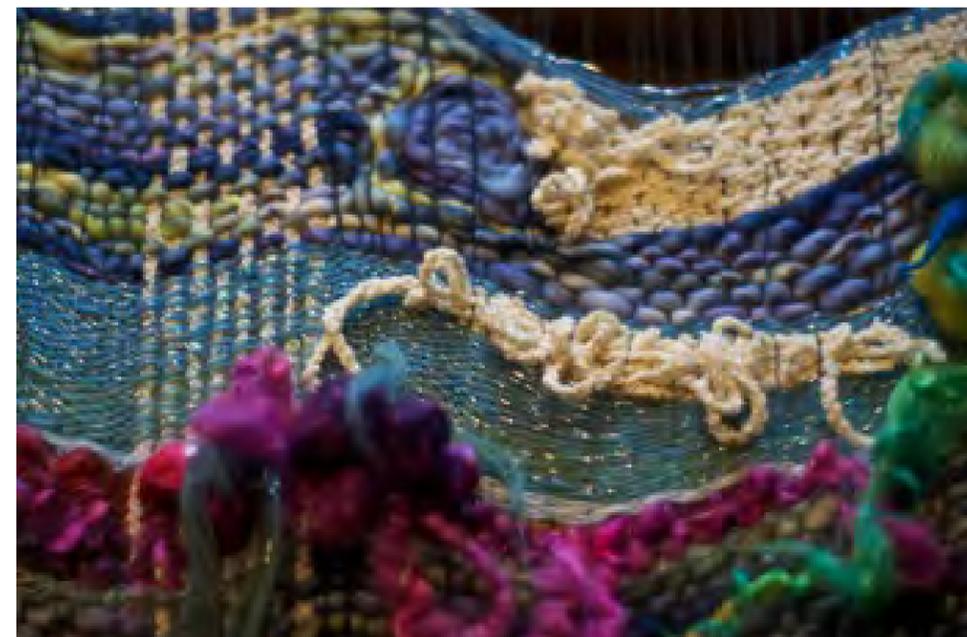
In my weaving I tried to recreate the activity but without wanting to make the final piece too busy, as one of my biggest 'things' of the day was the peacefulness of it too.

I worked to create this by using colours that harmonized and belonged in the same colour 'family', predominantly blues with splashes of other colours to add interest, just like in the ocean.



Keeping the colour pallet simple can create a restful and cohesive piece even if you are adding in many different textures and effects.

I also worked on keeping it this way by making the wave shapes in the weft, a background of rolling waves and a regular flow of lines and curves to tell the story of the gentle breathing of the ocean as it swept in and out between the rocks.



To do this I *used my fingers to 'beat' the weft into the warp unevenly, pressing it into the shape I wanted.* I also built up areas to shape the waves around, making these areas a feature inside the wave form:



The swirling blue in there is simply yarn wound into shape and inserted between the warp, since this is a wall hanging not a wearable piece, I know these shapes will remain in place well, and when I have done this in wearables I also add some stitching to keep it in place.

Rather than having a complete design drawn up, I worked from a rough sketch and my mind map outline, each time I wound the warp forward I would review what I had just done first, knowing it would be soon hidden around the cloth beam! And I worked on creating a flow from one section to the next.

In your piece for this workshop you may want to work on a short piece, even the length of your weaving area only, or to make a rectangular piece for the wall. This may make it easier for you to create a weaving that has this sense of cohesiveness and flow rather than being a series of slightly more random sections (unless this is part of your intended design!).

I do not believe that 'freeform' weaving necessarily equates entirely to totally unplanned progression or randomness, however it can very well contain areas of total spontaneous creation within it. You may even want to plan for areas in which you will create patterned weaving as part of your design, if you have a four or more shafted loom and wish to warp and thread it for a specific pattern, you can use this at whim inside your design and between your plain weave to create stunning effects and features.

This kind of forward planning in your warping will actually give you MORE freedom later because it gives you more choices of what you will weave throughout your piece as you develop your design on the go.

Giving yourself choices is key.

It is also often the case that having sound boundaries and an over-riding structure creates the environment in which you are better able to explore and play while you have the safety of knowing you have ground-rules and a 'fallback' in your design process, you will never get lost or stuck once you have your 'outline' in your mindmap to come back to when you need it. And when you are finished you will know that your work will remain cohesive and relevant to your original theme because this will continue to recur naturally as you follow your plan from which your decision making was consistently linked back to your theme.

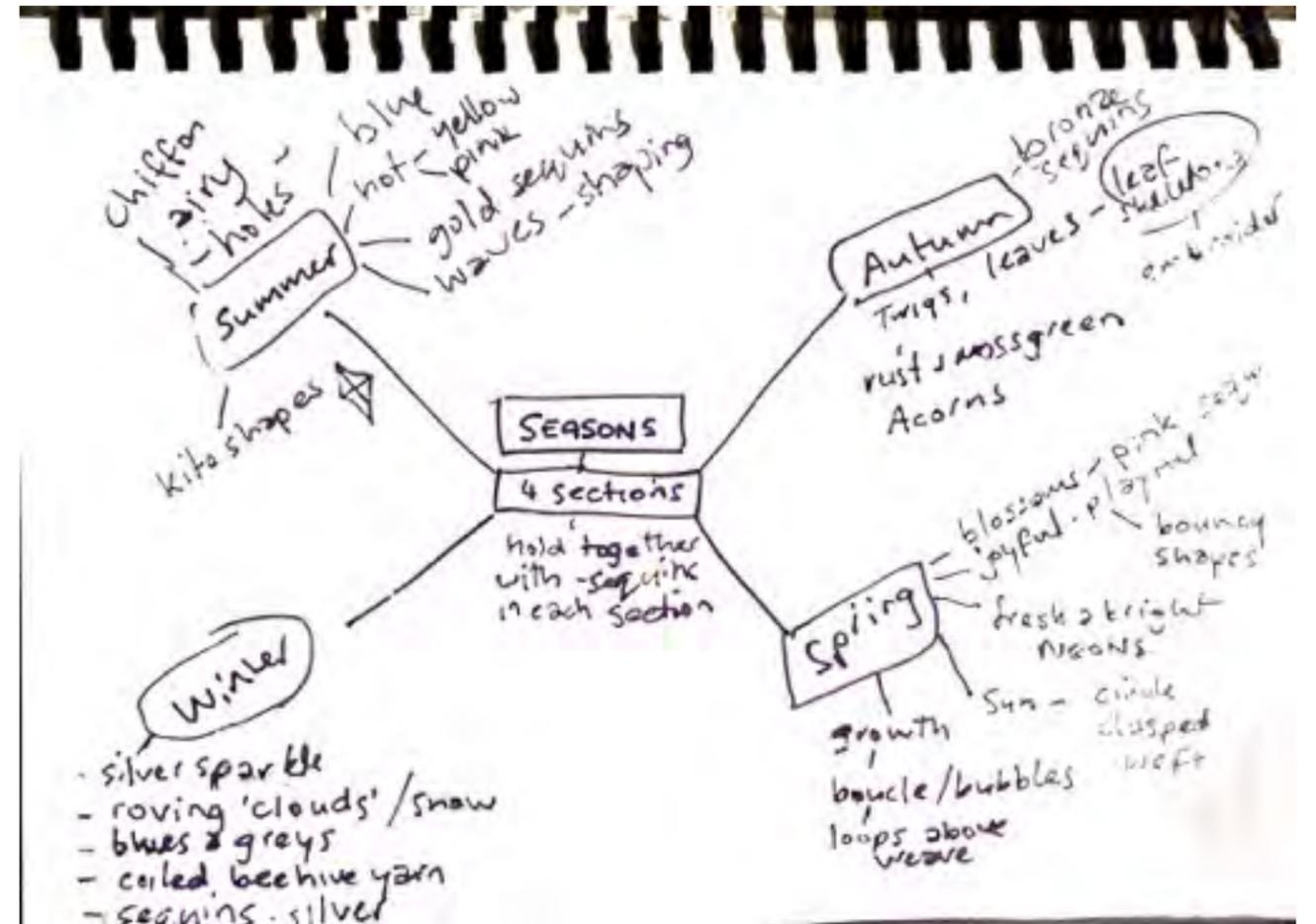
Week 3 Task

It is now time for you to repeat your mind mapping activity from the first week of our spinning workshop! Except this time, you are planning the entire weaving, not just a yarn. This is where you can get super creative!

First think about your theme and write it in the middle of the page: 'Seasons'. Then, as with your yarn, link up a bunch of words and ideas that you can relate to the word Seasons. Each of those words can link up again to another set of words. Now circle the ones that speak to you the most!

Now think about what you want to say about your theme. For example, a 'winter' story might involve swirling snow, sharp icicles, and dark evergreen foliage. It could have patches of

iced over water, black and dark under the layer of sheen, it might have areas I would stitch over the weaving to create twig shapes and bare branches layered over the background. I might even embroider a snowflake over a large plain weave area of pale blues and graduated shades of blue. Or you might like to create a weaving that reflects something of each season, that shows the passing of the year and the four seasons.



The above is an example of one of my mind map 'scribbles' as I considered ways I could use this theme to design something. I realised that each section might be quite different so tried to think of a way I could link them all in, I thought of using sequins in a different colour for each season, but having them scattered over the entire weaving to give it some cohesiveness.

In your weaving you may want to focus on one season only, or on a seasonal activity you enjoy (swimming in summer, skiing in winter etc) or on a festival associated with a season, or a memory you have that is strongly linked to a specific time of the year... you are free to choose your own path with this, and if you are not sure where to start, begin with your mind map and let your word associations trigger your ideas. Just because you have a word written on the mind map doesn't mean you 'have' to include it in your plan.

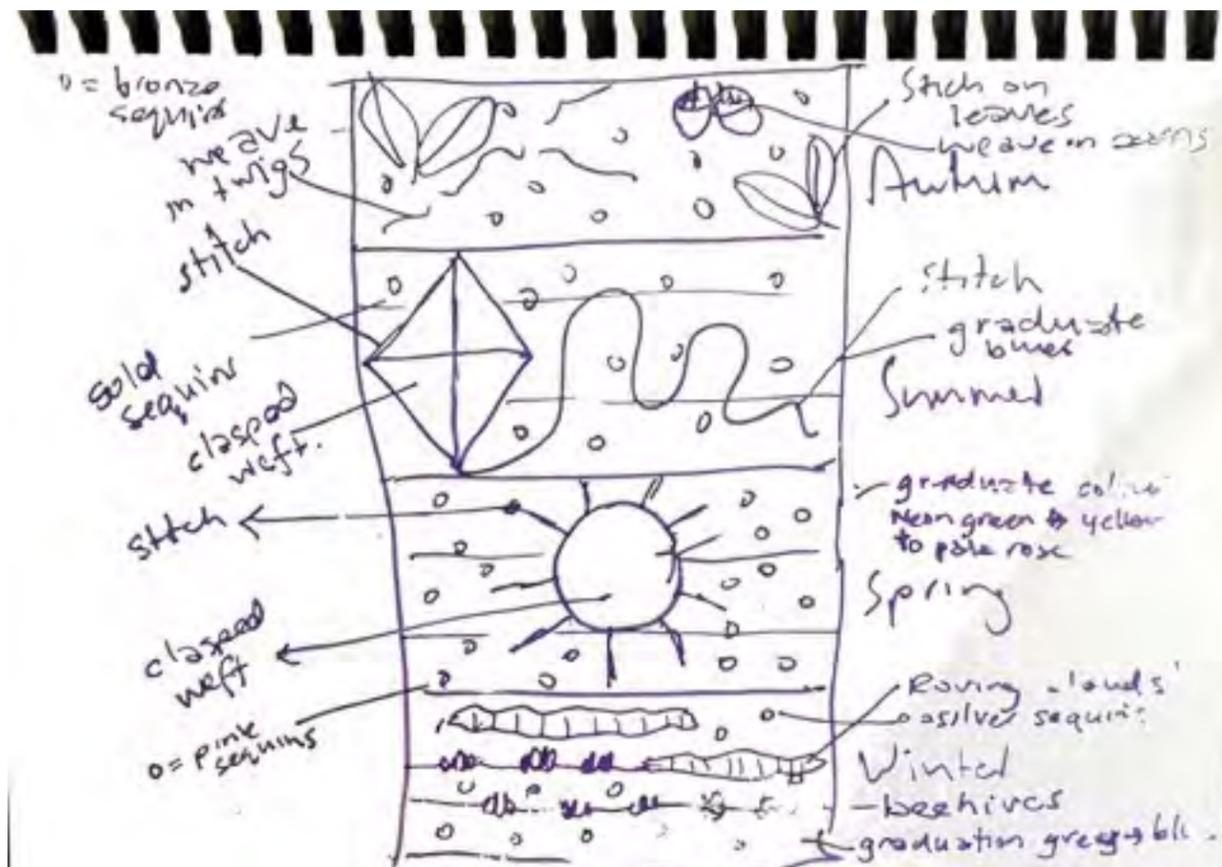
Use your mindmap in the same way you did for the yarns, taking your abstract ideas and making them concrete, refining them into your materials list and notes about the shapes and forms you want to create and the techniques you want to use.

Remember this is not set in stone and you are free to alter your plan as you go, add or remove techniques to and from your list of options, and allow it to evolve even as you are weaving. The mind map is your start point that sets you on the path with an idea of where you want to go, you can stray from the path at will!

Now you should think about how this all might 'look' if you were to weave it! Here is an example of the next development from the mind map I made, this is the kind of sketch I make before I weave, this is what I use instead of a pattern!

There is a lot of detail missing, but most of this I will design 'on the fly' as I weave, however the main design elements are here - the sectioning of the weaving, the main motif in each panel, the add ins and some of the techniques I will use and the basic colours I will use for each section. It looks pretty rough, but this is mostly as a memory jog and overall guide, the detail is added 'freeform' as I weave.

In Week 4 I will share with you a few specific weaving techniques for creating different effects in your weaving.



Loom Choice

This is going to be a short section indeed! (I am sure you are relieved!) You can use any loom you want for this kind of weaving. It is not the loom that decides your weaving, it is you.

You may of course have some limitations or restrictions, such as your reeds may not accommodate bulky or textured yarns, or you have 2 shafts not 8, or you have a limited weaving area and width. You will know these things before you start your mind map and planning, and you can include that into your design and use it in your creation process.



It is important to work 'with' your tools rather than against them, do not try to add a thicker yarn to your warp, or a mohair yarn (for example) that you will only end up fighting as you beat, find another way to get those yarns into your weaving! Maybe add your thick yarns lengthwise as a kind of floating 'warp' instead of a floating weft, or weave them through the finished section of cloth before you wind it on to the cloth beam, or find a way to move them into the weft instead in your design.

Narrow looms may restrict your wall hanging width, but you could look at making several individual pieces designed to work together when hung or even stitched together afterwards. I always say if you find you are fighting something then you just need to find another way to do it! So feel free to use whatever loom you have or want to use for this workshop project and design for what you have.

If you have no 'official' loom you can easily construct your own loom that will work for this course! You need something you can warp and weave into, a Tapestry loom would work but you can also make one yourself out of an old picture or mirror frame. Tap in some nails top and bottom to attach your warp threads (I would suggest about 1cm apart).

Or you could even use a large piece of cardboard! Cut slits top and bottom to wind your warp around, again about 1cm apart. Just keep in mind if you are using cardboard it will not allow you much tension in your warp or the whole thing will buckle, so keep this one smaller (think about stitching together a number of pieces instead of making one large one).

Weft choices

For this weaving you should already have at least one purpose spun yarn from the first two weeks of our workshop. I cannot tell you exactly how much you will need because it will depend on the size of your weaving, the thickness of your yarns, and how much you beat or don't beat them into the weaving. In addition you will want to have a collection of yarns you can draw from for this weaving, some fine, some textured, and some thick.



These can be handspun or commercially spun, it is also a great way to use up small skeins and project leftovers! You can also use unspun roving, any organic materials or add ins you like, threads and effect fibers... feel free to add in anything that will link up well with the theme and your mindmap plan.

Warps and Warping

Your warping choice is also entirely up to you, but my suggestion, unless you have yarns to use that will work well with the yarns you plan to weave with, is to **use a simple black warp** for your Seasons wall hanging. The techniques I will share with you to create pattern and interest in the weaving are based on a simple plain weave, so a single coloured warp will give you freedom to use your weft yarns in any way you like on any area of the cloth.

If you have a loom with a heddle or reeds you should use a yarn that will easily fit through them and has enough strength to not snap easily when you test it.

If you have a Majacraft loom or one that provides you with various reed dent sizes you can of course make use of that and add different thickness and textures of yarn into your warp if you want to! If you have made your own loom out of a picture frame or card you are also not restricted in what kind of warp yarns you can use!

You can make the warp as long as you like, but I would suggest for this project not to warp more than a scarf length or 1.5-2 meters, for a wall hanging even half a metre is enough. The goal of this project is to try out some different weaving effects and use the space you have to create a 'story' with your yarns, so warp a length that you feel gives you enough room to play with the yarns you have spun in the last couple of weeks and to try a few different ideas out as you weave.

You may choose to pre-wind your warp on a warping board but I would suggest you use a 'direct warping' method which I find quick and easy to do! Please follow this link to my warping demonstration to see how to do this:

<https://youtu.be/oeMQbmi5cwk>



Task

Warp your loom ready for weaving!

If you have a shafted loom please warp it for plain weave (you can warp just two shafts) or if you wish to include patterns that require a specific warp then feel free to do so!

If you are using a DIY loom made from a frame with nails to hold your warp, all you need do is wind your warp thread back and forth around each nail one at a time to make vertical 'lines' with your thread. There are lots of tutorials to be found on YouTube that can help you or contact Suzy directly if you are unsure how to do this.

Week 4 will include Effects and Techniques, specific weaving techniques for creating design elements in your freeform weaving.

Finding extra Resources

If you are new to weaving, do some homework this week on YouTube and find as much as you can that shows weaving on different looms and in different ways. Start building up a picture of what weaving entails and how to do the basic 'plain' or 'tabby' weave.

As well as my Direct Warping video I shared earlier in this section, here are a few videos I have found to help you get started! There is already so much good quality information available we should make use of it whenever we can!

How to do Plain Weave on a Tapestry loom - this is also useful if you have made your own loom from a frame: <https://youtu.be/F7RrKssmy2E>

How to warp a simple Frame Loom: <https://youtu.be/NQvODABbAHA>

Warping a table (shafted) loom with a pre-wound warp (Ashfords) <https://youtu.be/MVjOF4cfc-Y>

An excellent series from Creativebug showing weaving plain weave on a frame loom: <https://youtu.be/jgM4niipQAM>

(this is also the same process if you are using a rigid heddle loom, except you will have your heddle to change the shed and beat the weft yarn into place.

A cool demo of 'Soumak' stitch - something you might like to use in your design! <https://youtu.be/OaP4eQLRefk>

Keep looking, it's a bit of a rabbit hole but many treasures of information and ideas can be found when searching weaving related videos on YouTube!

Week 4: Just Weave!



This is our fourth and final week in this workshop (sob!). You should now have:

- Your handspun yarns ready to weave
- A Mind Map plan and sketches of the weaving you want to create (your guide)
- A selection of yarns, threads, and add-ins ready to go
- A warped loom ready to weave



What follows are descriptions of a few of the techniques you might like to use to create your design elements in your weaving. Keep an open mind and view your weaving as a conscious creative process, pause at times and look at what you are creating, give yourself time to think about your yarns and materials and what other ways you can use them alongside your plain weave. Can you loop your weft around and around groups of warp to make a loose area of loopy texture?

Maybe you can weave two colour threads at once and wrap them around the warp threads in opposite direction across a row or in one area. You could add in streaks of unspun fiber here and there, across the width of the weaving to delineate a section. Much of your weaving design can be done 'on the fly' as you create, this is your canvas to play with, and you can return to your mind map whenever you want to check you are still on track with your theme.

Effects and techniques

Remember, these are all only suggestions of a few techniques you may wish to try out during your weaving, there are so many resources both online and in books, you should feel free to draw inspiration from any sources to include in your weaving.

Do not be afraid to try out different techniques or to combine them in new ways, and do not hesitate to think outside of the box, if you want to cross-stitch into your weaving then there are no rules against it! If you want to add macrame sections then of course you should! There are no limitations on what you can do with your weaving beyond the actual constraints of the loom and your materials.



The above image is a close up of a piece of felt that I cut to shape and appliquéd onto the weaving (while it was on the loom), I added some stitched detail and the little shell as further decorative elements. You can use any kind of material to applicque into your weaving like this, pieces of lace, eco-dyed cloth, or even scraps from other weavings. Just cut your shape and stitch it into place, you can select from matching yarns or cotton threads for your stitching, make the stitching a visible feature or make it less obvious, it is entirely up to you! These items can most easily be added while your weaving is still on the loom, and as they sit flat they will not cause problems with your tensioning when wound onto the cloth beam.

Varied Texture

One of the easiest ways to create interesting elements in your weaving is to let the yarn do the talking for you! Choosing from a range of yarns and allowing them to create contrasts for you in the weaving is simply a matter of selecting the yarns that will best show these contrasts. It could be a contrast in bulk, colour, or texture.



The above example shows how you can add bulky yarns into a fine yarn weaving to really contrast the textures, it also shows how colour can make an impact on this contrast as well with the darker bulky yarn really contrasting against the hot red behind it.

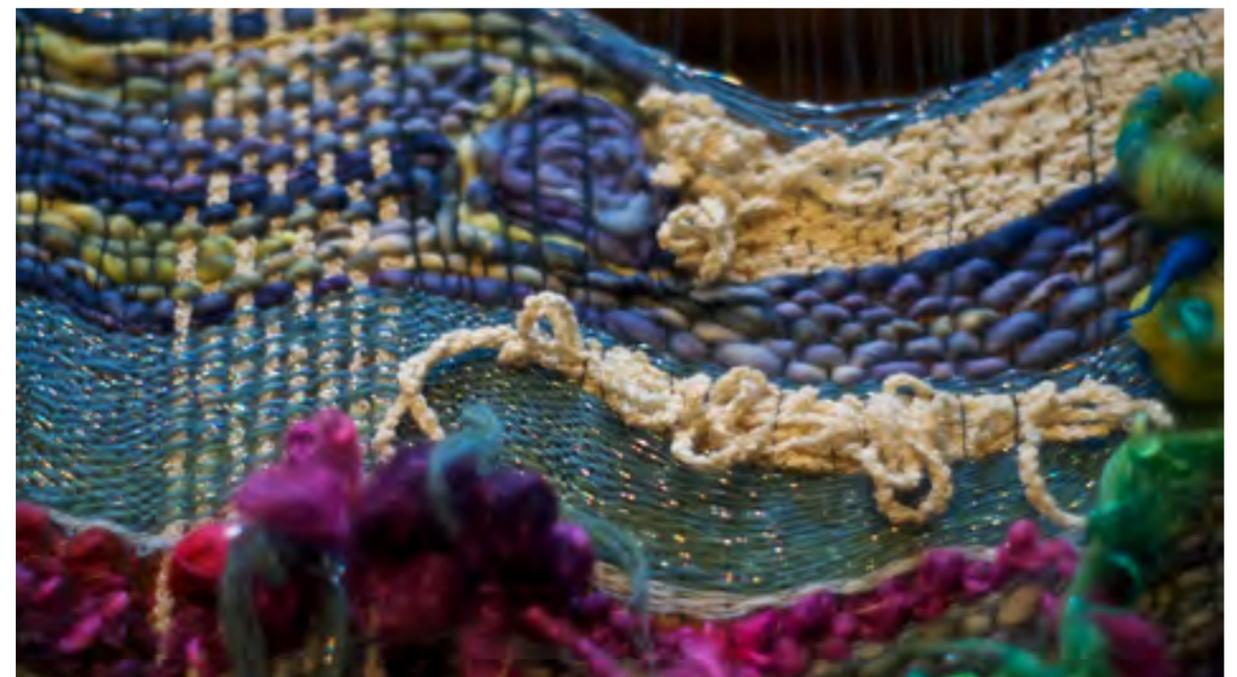
When using this technique you should just be aware that your weave structure will change and the bulky yarns can cause some 'puckering' in your fabric if you add in solid sections. This only

matters if you had designed for a smooth and even fabric, otherwise it just becomes part of the design!

You can also use unspun fibre such as strips of roving, just add it into your weaving to make interesting contrasts and textures! Just take a strip of roving and tuck it in to your warp in the position you want it, and then beat it gently into place. Once you change your sheds your roving will be well secured.



You might also want to experiment with taking quantities of tangled yarn scraps to weave in, this can make great effects and contrasts in your weaving. Simply bundle it all up and sit it into your



warp, leaving stray loops and pieces sticking out. Once you have changed shed and beaten into place it will be secure.

Clasped Weft

This is a technique you can use to create colour changes at any point across your row. You can use this effect to make vertical shapes in your weaving, blocks of colour, triangles and points, a zigzag down the centre of your weaving etc.

To create this effect you will need two different yarns, try starting this using smooth yarns of similar thickness, and later you can try variations in textures and contrast.

This is a way of interlocking your two yarns inside the open shed in order to create two colours or textures of yarn within one row of weaving. Because of the way it works you will end up with rows of double thickness yarn, so your weft will be dominant against the warp.

Start with sending your shuttle through the open shed all the way to the other side. Then pick up your second thread by taking your first yarn around the second (under then back over to go around it). This will catch your second yarn in a loop which you then use to pull it back through the shed.

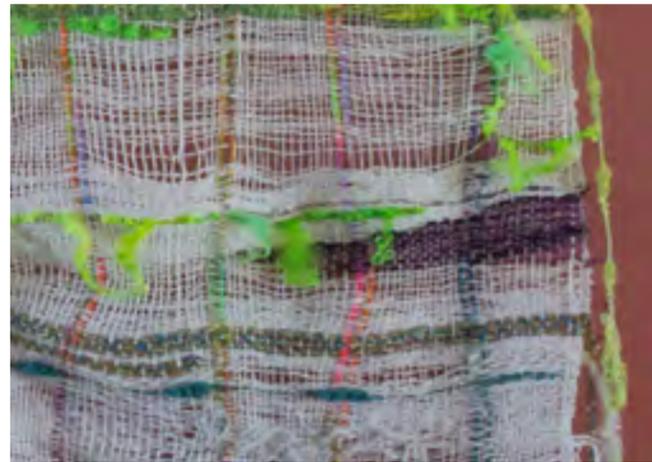
Draw your first thread back through the shed all the way across dragging your second thread behind the first until the join is where you want it.

Change sheds and beat your weft into place.

Repeat the process, again running yarn 1 through the open shed, catching yarn 2 and pulling it back through the shed. You can choose where you want the join to rest depending on your design. You can make lines, angles, curves and waves using this technique.

There are lots of demonstration videos available online, I think you would find this one quite useful to see this technique in practice: <https://youtu.be/AoJ4lcKvrvE>

For a variation on this technique you can also use it to make a circle or another shape in your weaving with a different colour. To do this you will need three quantities of yarn, one (base colour) for the right side of your weaving, one for your circle in the middle, and more of your base colour yarn for the left side of your weaving.



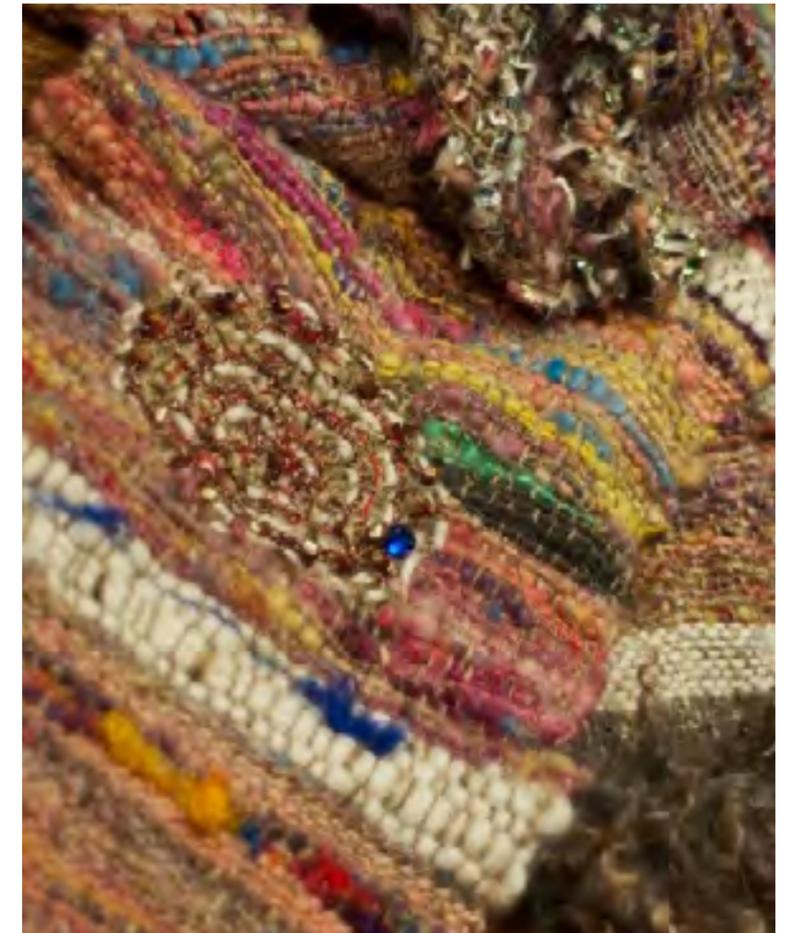
Start your base colour from both sides of the warp, bring it from the outside to where you want to start your circle, the bottom edge. Weave your circle colour left to right across the number of warps you want to start it on (try an uneven number 3 or 5) and catch it around the right hand warp thread. Weave the right hand thread back to the right side of the weaving, and then the base thread to the left of the circle (where you started it from).

Now catch the left hand base thread around the circle thread and weave Yarn 1 back to the left edge of your weaving.

Change sheds and beat into place.

Now each row that you make, expand the width of your centre yarn to create the shape that you want, you can adjust placement in the same way as in the basic clasped weft, pulling your loops into place. You can move your shape inwards and outwards by manipulating the weft where the two colours join and loop around each other on each row.

The example on this page shows a circle shape I made with the triple clasped weft technique that I then stitched onto with the spiral stitching to highlight the shape further.



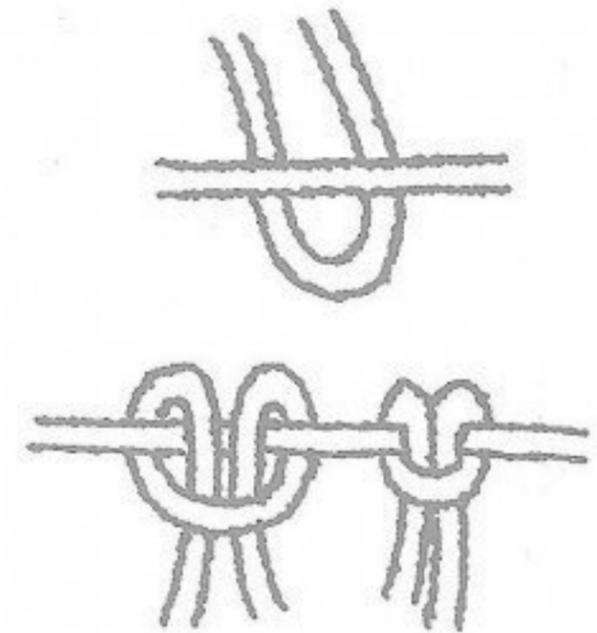
Tying in locks

This is a technique I have used often for adding locks into a weaving. It creates less bulk than adding a tailspun yarn but it gives the same effect, allowing the locks to hang outside the warp with the tips out like a fringe.

It is very easy to do and also secures the locks into place very well, and you can add them exactly where you want them to go. You can place individual locks in any area and as many or few as you like, you can add them in rows, you can tie them on the selvedges to make more fringe the length of your piece, there are so many options!



Effectively this is a 'larks head' knot.
(Image Source: D. Macpherson)



Take your long lock with the cut end pointing towards the warp thread and make a 'hoop' shape, you can see in the image below how I have the cut end and the tip end caught between my fingers of my right hand, the hoop between my left hand fingers. Now it is ready to pull the hoop under one warp so you have the hoop shape on one side of the warp thread and the rest of the lock on the other.



Pull the tail AND the shorter cut end of the lock from the same side of the warp around the warp thread and through the hoop, pull them all the way through and tighten by pulling the tip and cut ends up tight to make a knot around the two ply yarn. Your lock should now be secure on the warp with the long 'tail' hanging out and the cut end tied in.

You might find this is a great technique for your Seasons theme, the locks can become flames, or drifting leaves, they could be long waving grasses in a field of the beautiful locks of a child (the season of youth!). There are lots of ways you can use this technique and the beauty of it is you do not need a large quantity of locks to create a wonderful effect.

Making Holes

Holes in a weaving can be excellent design elements, effectively they create a 'negative space' in your cloth, can provide a feeling of airiness, add to a shabby chic effect, and can make breaks in otherwise complex patterns, there are myriad ways to use them!



Making holes is quite easy, in fact the simplest way I know is to simply weave to the place in your warp where you want the hole to be, and turn your shuttle around and weave back to the edge, just weave to this point for the distance you want your hole to be and then weave the full width of your warp to get your shuttle now to the opposite side.

You can then go back and weave from the other side to form the other side of the hole. You

can make it wider by pulling tighter on the weft, basically you are creating selvages inside the 'hole' and pulling up your weft will create a curve in the edges of the hole.

If you want to be able to beat both sides of the hole evenly then charge up two bobbins and weave each side simultaneously, beating after you have woven each shed on both sides of the hole.

Another way to make a hole, and this will depend on your materials, is to simply put your fingers into the weaving and push the threads apart. This will work for smaller areas and will be most successful if you are not using slippery yarns such as silks. If you are making your piece as a wall hanging you can expect your 'hole' to stay where it is, but if you are making something to wear, such as a scarf or shawl, you will want to make sure this area is 'fulled' when you finish the weaving, and we will get to this at the end of this section! If your fabric is well enough full then your hole will stay in place as the fibers will hold on to each other, not felted but melded together enough to retain the form you create.

Crochet into the Warp

This is a great way to add extra texture and interest into the weaving, you can make patterns and very much freeform where you add the crochet. You can crochet across a whole row, or you can make a shape in your warp that is crochet and weave around it (either side). You can crochet along a single warp thread, and you can patch and then crochet pieces that float on top of the weaving, chain stitch lengths or shapes that you can weave in and attach to integrate into the piece much more than if you added them at the end to a finished weave. This is a technique to play with!



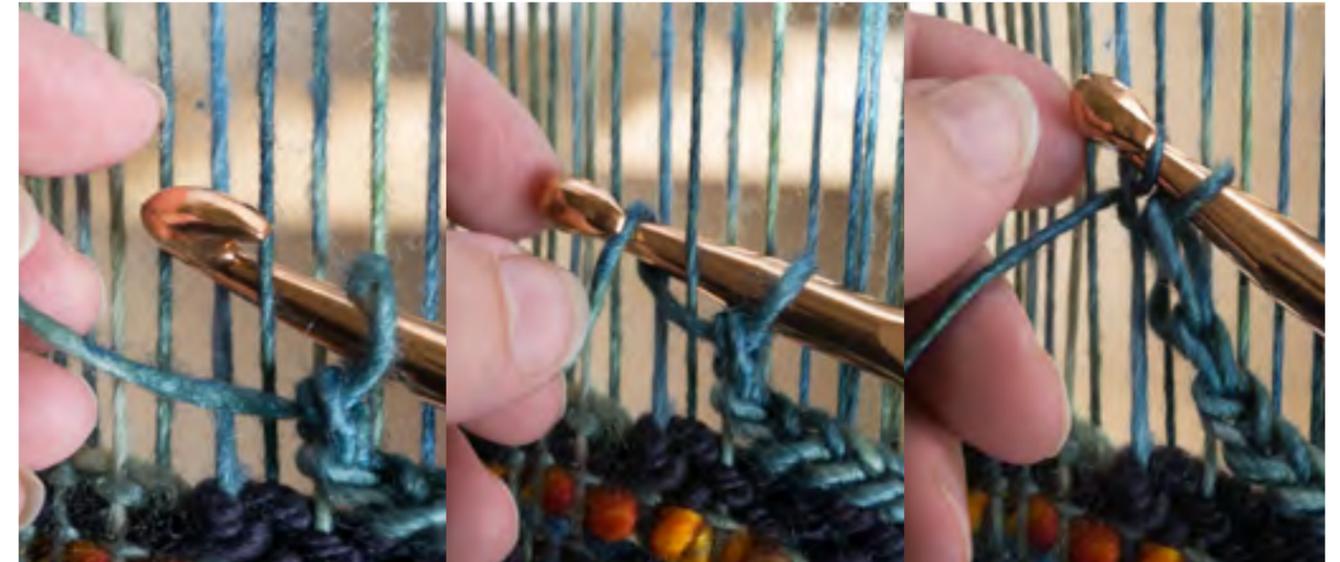
Start by attaching your yarn to a warp thread by making a loop in your yarn under the warp and facing away from the direction you will be crocheting



Take your hook through the loop and over the warp thread to pick up the long end of the yarn, pull that through the loop, this will make a chain stitch around the warp thread.



Next take your hook under the next warp thread and pick up the yarn from that side, bring it back under the warp thread.



Then take your hook back over the warp thread, yarn over and pull through both loops to make a new stitch around the warp thread..

Repeat this across your row. You can crochet around each warp thread, or every second, or work just a section. You can beat this crochet into place just as you do a weft thread.

This will make a nice ridge in your weaving and should stand up above the standard weft, you could even do the entire piece this way for an interesting effect!

Stitching to Create shapes

This is something I have played with a little and I am sure you can think of more ways to do this than I have. This is done while the weaving is on the loom, you could do it afterwards but personally I enjoy adding in these details as I work, and I also think the tension on the piece helps to create more sculptural forms than when it is loose and more cloth-like.

This is a technique in which you use a darning needle to pick up parts of your weaving and sew it, using the stitches to pull it into 3d shapes. In this example you can see I used a kind of corset lacing stitch to sew back and forth across an area and then pulled that together to form a kind of



funnel shape or pleat in the weaving. I then used those stitches as a warp and wove them with a contrasting colour (black) to make a solid layer.

You can make these kinds of forms in regular places over your weaving, or you can make them randomly, you can add extra shapes into the funnels, sew in some kind of add in like feathers or locks, or hang shells inside them as I did here.



Add Ins

Especially for decorative pieces such as wall hangings, you may want to add in a wide range of 'extras', sticks or twigs, feathers, beads, leaves, shells, found objects.. anything you can think of really! You can do this while you weave, integrating your items into the weaving.

You can also do this after your weaving is finished. There are a couple of things you will want to keep in mind as you plan when to add your extras. Firstly, if you are making a weaving long enough cloth to need winding onto the cloth beam, you need to consider how much your add in will stick out of the weaving, will it create a big lump that is going to change your tension a lot once it is wound onto the beam? If so you may want to add this in afterwards. Or consider how robust or fragile the piece is, could it break when it is wound onto the beam and encased in cloth that is under tension? Again you should add these items after your weaving is completed and off the loom.

Things like beads, sequins, feathers, locks, and smaller add ins, these can be integrated as you weave. For your beads you could try threading them onto your weft and moving each bead into place on each row as you weave, this will give you an even placement of beads.

Or you could thread one on here and there more randomly. Think about your overall design and the look you want to achieve. If you are not sure, go back to your plan and make sure you are adding these things in a way that is consistent with your overall design, for example, spacing things close together can give a busy and more detailed look than if you were to add items more sparsely.

In my example here you can see I added a row of knotted silk ribbon to create a feathery look.



In my next examples you can see how I have added in flat shell beads during the weaving, and then larger shells after the piece is finished.

Here are the flat shells that will roll into the easily:



And in the next one shells were stitched on after the weaving was off the loom:



Floating Weft

Floating weft is another way of adding texture to your weaving. This is a simple technique to use: basically, instead of going under and over each warp (through the shed) that you bring your weft to the front and skip over sections of warp entirely, leaving a weft thread 'floating' on top of the warp.

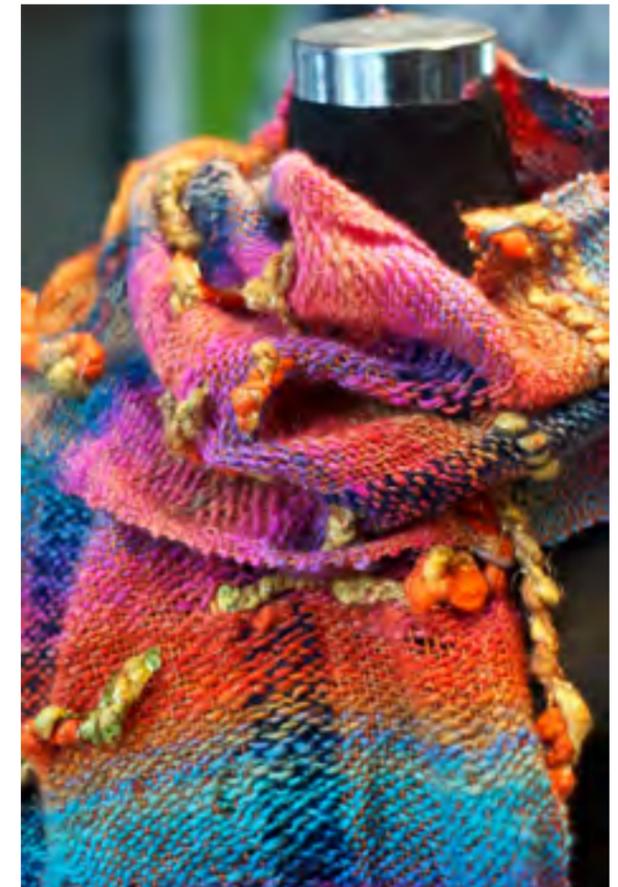
To do this just select the place you want to start this and weave your shuttle through the shed to that point. Then take your shuttle out of the warp to the front of your weaving. Count over the number of warp threads you want to skip and insert the shuttle back into the shed at that point, continue to the other side, beat as usual.

You can add as many or as few floating weft sections as you want into your row. You could make these in the same place on a number of rows to make a block section of floating weft, or you could stagger them to create a pattern. You could also move them to the back not the front of the work to expose the warp threads above them.

You don't need to just use yarn on a shuttle you can also use lengths of feature yarn and float it both horizontally and vertically around on the surface of your weaving, catching it back into the weft in places to create the shapes you like.

You can use a contrasting yarn for your floating warp as shown in the example right, the thick art yarn was moved around the weaving and integrated randomly into the weave, alternating sides and direction.

In this case it is not so much a floating 'weft' which would more traditionally have created patterns across the weaving, so much as a floating yarn that is allowed to wander in any direction.



Tapestry weaving ideas

You can also draw from some of the techniques used in tapestry weaving, these are great ways to create shapes in your weaving, keeping in mind that you do not have to weave across your warp evenly and beat with your heddle on each row. You can use your freedom to build up areas to create angles, waves, wedges, curves.. Add in chunks of a different colour, create diagonal lines... there are many possibilities!



To do this simply start working on the space you want to build up and shape. You can weave back and forth just across this area, moving your turning point across the warp to create the shape you want.

When you have that area forming the shape you were looking for you can then start building up the areas around and next to it. Eventually you will begin to even this up and can go back to weaving all the way across your row if you want to.

You can also build up these areas together, working with a number of colours and shuttles across one row as in tapestry weaving.



The above example from my 'Beach' weaving uses several ideas in one, firstly the 'sea foam' is a bundled up length of the white yarn, scrunched up and added into the weaving as described previously. It is largely held in place by the warp, with a few hand stitches with white cotton in and out of the mass and round the warp threads to make sure there is no movement once I placed it where I wanted it.

Around this lump I used something of a tapestry technique to shape the weft, using fingers to tap the weft into place. Next to this I added the swirl of blue yarn. I created this swirl outside of the weaving first, because I wanted it to be an entire piece, not one woven into a round shape through the weft, which would give it a more 'woven' look while I wanted something that looked more 'painted' and showing the spiraling clearly.

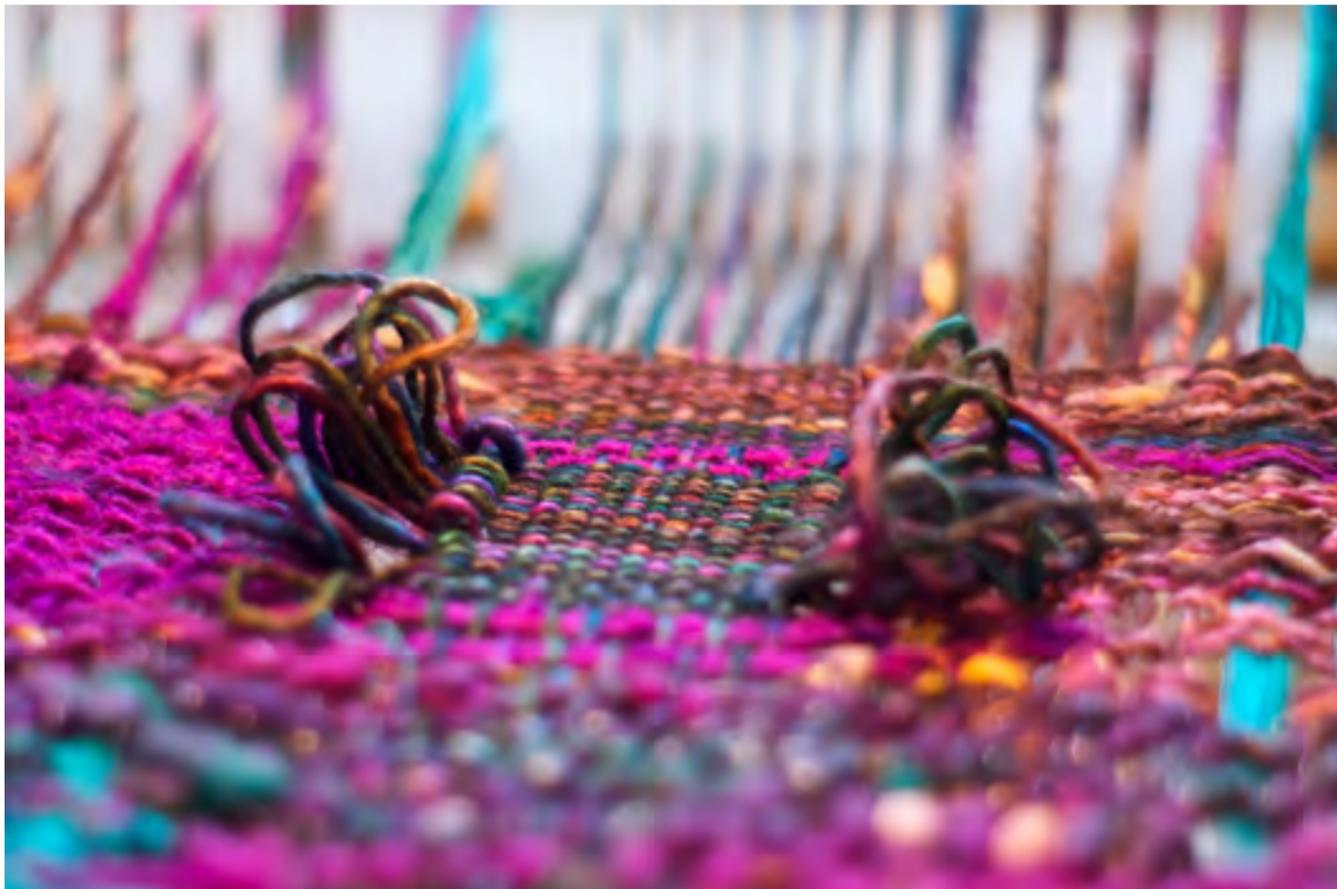
So I took a length of blue yarn and spiralled it around (on a flat surface) into the shape I wanted, then I took a needle and a matching cotton thread and stitched through it from the sides and into the middle of the shape, essentially locking the spiral together into one piece, while the stitches are hidden inside the yarn. I was then able to slide this between the open warp threads, changing sheds locks it in place, and I added a few more stitches to attach it to the warp more securely, This is a technique thats great for making neat and interesting shapes in your weaving for wall hangings and decoration, but I wouldnt recommend it for anything you will use as wearable fabric because it could potentially move or slip inside the warp thread.

Another technique that is fun to play with is a simple one of making loops in your weft. This creates interesting textures and contrasts in your surface design.

You can quite straightforwardly, pull up loops at any point in your weaving and beat them into place with your next row.

You might like to try what I did in the example below, pulling up a loop at the same point on each row to make a vertical line of loops.

You could try other interesting things like tying a knot in the loop to make it stand out more from the weaving, or using beads in your weft thread and sliding them into the loop as you form it, or pile up loops together of all different lengths, there are many ways you can create texture with this technique and a little out of the box thinking.



Conclusion

I hope you have enjoyed your spinning and weaving in this four week course, and that you have found some inspiration and ideas for working with your fibers and yarns that have taken you slightly out of your usual comfort zone to try something new!

My goal is that the materials and techniques we have covered are just the beginning of your explorations, and that you will continue to experiment with new combinations of fibers, techniques, and design.

We are so lucky in the fiber art world to have such a long history to draw from, and the freedom to be able to play with traditional techniques and combine them with new ideas, materials, and put them together in innovative ways.

I hope that the use of Mind Mapping techniques in the design process has also helped you to build that bridge between abstract ideas and concepts and the actual hands on creation of a tangible concrete item! Taking the process that extra step beyond the map itself and creating the actual plan for your fiber prep and spinning from it can be a very useful way of creating something that remains 'freeform' and pattern-free while still keeping you focussed on your theme and certain of a cohesive flow and design construction in your work.

Please do share your creations with us our [Fiberygoodness Facebook group!](#)

Thank you for your participation in this course and sharing your experiments with me!

Happy freeforming!
Suzy



WoolWench Weaving