

Full On Into Weaving

Liz Gipson



Fulled fabrics are so fun! You get all the joy of weaving, then you throw the fabric in the washing machine. Any imperfections you may be fussing over wash away, making it perfect for your first few pieces of weaving. If you take your fabric all the way to felted, you can cut the fabric in the shape you want.

During this workshop, we will weave a perfectly sized grab-and-go bag that fits your phone, wallet, and keys. The design takes advantage of the felted fringe, or if you want a cleaner look, you can trim them away completely or cut close to the knots to create bobbles. The strap is made by braiding the project yarn with a long length of faux suede cord.

Crossbody Bag Specs

Yarn DK-weight, 1,000-1,200 yd/lb, wool, that will felt (non-superwash) in one or two colors. See page 4 for tips on how to test the feltiness of your yarn. Shown in Brown Sheep Prairie Spun.

Tools Rigid-heddle loom with at least an 9" weaving width; 8-dent rigid heddle; shuttle; tapestry needle.

Notions 10 feet of faux suede cord.

Warp Yardage 90 yd

Weft Yardage 65 yd

Strap & Stitching Yardage 10 yd

Warp Length 50" (allows for 20" loom waste and fringe, and about 35% take-up and shrinkage)

Warp Ends 64

Width in Rigid Heddle/Reed 8"

EPI (Ends Per Inch)/Sett 8

PPI (Picks Per Inch) 8

Finished Size Bag measured about 6" wide from seam to seam with 5 1/2" interior width, and 7" long with a 3" flap.

Warping Following the project specs, warp the loom as follows: Center the warp in the rigid heddle for 8".

Wind the warp on the back beam, adding packing paper between the layers. Move one thread in each slot to a hole. Tie the warp on the front apron rod and adjust for even tension.

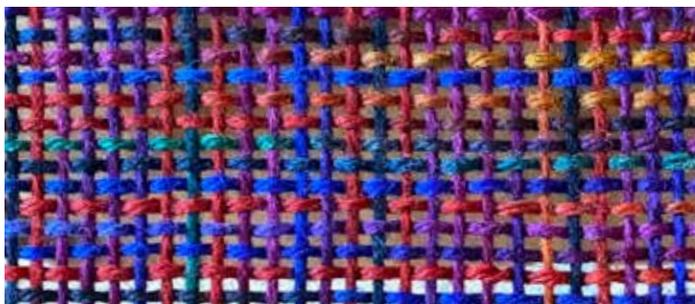
Weaving Wind your shuttle with your weft yarn.

You will use your weft as your header so it will shrink at the same rate as the rest of your fabric. (The header is typically woven with a different contrasting yarn so it can easily be removed, see photo on page 3.)

Weave about 1½" of weft or until the gaps formed by tying on the apron rod are closed. This area will be cut away after finishing.

As you weave, place your yarn at an angle in the shed before you press it into place. This will ensure there is enough length for it to travel over and under the warp yarns without drawing in at the selvages.

Leaving a little bit of negative space between your yarns allows room for your yarns to settle as they relax and shrink in the wash. This creates a more supple cloth than if they were densely packed.



Leave room for your yarns to move! As you place each pick, leave a little space between the warp and weft. As you weave, look between the yarns for little boxes of negative space.

Keep in mind you are going to throw this fabric in the washing machine, so don't fuss over your technique too much. It will all come out in the wash!

Weave until you can no longer get a clean shed,

about 25". If you wish, you can change up your weft color at any time.

Cut the weft yarn from the shuttle, leaving about a 6" tail. Thread the tail on a tapestry needle, then needleweave it, threading the yarn over and under the warp yarns, behind the last picks you wove.

Weave a couple of picks of a different contrasting smooth cellulose yarn to keep the weft in place as you remove the fabric from the loom.

Finishing Working from the back, cut the warp free of the apron rod behind the heddle, being careful not to snip the apron cords. Untie the warp from the front apron rod.

Lay the fabric on a flat surface with the end that has the header yarn facing you. Weight it with a book or something similar to keep it in place.

Cut the header out in small sections. Working in bundles of four warp ends, tie a series of overhand knots to secure the fringe.

Trim the fringe on both ends to about 6".

Fulling See page 4 for more information about fulling and felting. For this project, I used the washing machine method.

The amount of shrinkage will vary with the yarn, water temperature, style of washing machine, and amount of agitation.

I suggest taking the most conservative route first. You can always run the fabric through the process again if the fabric hasn't fully fused enough to cut without further finishing.

For a lightly fullled fabric, set the machine on the delicate cycle using warm water on a low water level setting if available. Add a cap of delicate washing soap. If you don't have any, regular washing soap is fine.

Allow the cycle to run to completion. If you have a machine without an agitator, try adding some heavy rags or old towels to provide some friction.

After removing the fabric from the machine, use an embroidery needle to see if you can easily pry the weft from the web of the fabric. If so, this is an indication that it needs to full more. You can try using a more aggressive cycle that involves more agitation.

The end with the knots may seem like a dense, jumbled mess. While the fabric is still wet, you can separate each knotted bundle. It may take a bit of muscle to do this.

Lightly block the fabric with your hands, or if desired, you can steam press the fabric while it is still damp so it dries flat. Air dry flat.

If you want your project to more fully, run it through the cycle again.



Cut the header at the end of your weaving, a little bit at a time, as you tie the overhand knots.

You can hand full your fabric by filling a bucket with hot water and a bit of soap. Then fill a second bucket with cold water. Agitate with your hands or use an agitator such as a plunger. Work the fabric for a bit and then plunge it into the cold water and swish to rinse. Repeat the process until you have your desired results.

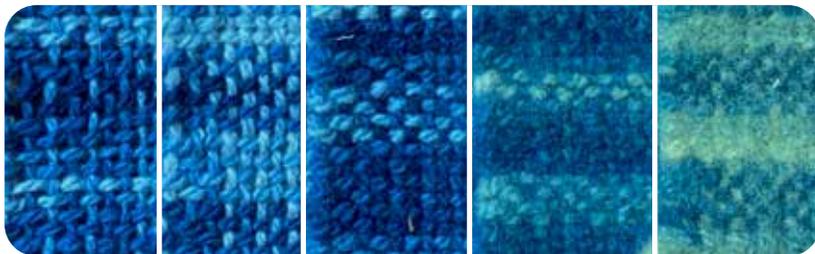
Finishing Cut the fringe on the end that isn't knotted from the fabric and trim the tails flush.

Fold the fabric to form your bag, creating your desired flap length. I find you need at least a 2" overlap for the bag to stay closed when in use. Work the seam on pages 5-6 to secure the sides of the bag. 🧵



Unfinished fringe turns into felted locks in the wash. Trim away the end of the fringe that doesn't have the knots.

Fully Finished



From left to right: Unwashed; handwashed; machine washed, gentle cycle with cold water, 10 minutes in the dryer on low heat setting; machine washed, regular cycle with hot water, 20 minutes in the dryer on regular heat setting; machine washed on heavy cycle with hot water, 30 minutes in the dryer on a high heat setting. Many hand-dyed yarns bleed a little bit. If you have concerns, you can try adding a color catcher sheet to the wash. They can be found in the laundry aisle of many grocery stores. Indigo can shift depending on the water's PH, so this is what you are seeing more than bleeding.

These samples are woven from 100% wool, indigo-dyed yarn. My test showed it to be a moderately good felter (see page 4 for more information). My machine is a top loader with a low profile agitator.

Some wools can be cut without further finishing with just a single wash on the gentle cycle, while others take a rougher finish. It seems counterintuitive, but many wools benefit from a machine wash on delicate and a short air fluff in the dryer.

The Full Story

FULLING VS. FELTING

The terms “fulling” and “felting” are often used interchangeably, but they refer to different processes. *Felting* is the process of agitating protein fibers, such as wool, with needles or water to fuse the fibers together into a solid fabric. Historically, *Fulling*, also known as waulking or walking, is a finishing process applied to woven cloth to remove oils and dirt and to create a dense, thick, cohesive fabric by repeatedly pounding the wet cloth, or in some cases, walking on it. Commercially available yarns for the modern maker rarely need to be scoured in this way. Fulling is still very much in use to create thicker, denser fabric from woven,

knitted, or crocheted items made from protein fibers. Fulling can be pushed to its extremes where the fibers permanently fuse together. Some wool projects benefit from fulling even if you aren't going to take them to a fused extreme.

DIFFERENTIAL SHRINKAGE

You can combine yarns that felt with yarns that don't (cotton, linen, rayon, and synthetics) to create a fabric with bobbles or bumps. This is called “differential shrinkage”. The Bobbled Slippers from *Weaving Made Easy* shown on page 5, are an example of this kind of fabric.

Will it Felt?

As weavers, we tend to acquire half-used balls of yarn from past projects. They often lose their ball bands and our memories falter when trying to remember the fibers they are made from. Here is a quick test to tell if your yarn is a good felter or not.



Cut two pieces of your yarn about 15" long—one to sample and another to compare. Shown here is Brown Sheep Prairie Spun, 100% wool (orange), Stitch Sprouts Crater Lake 100% superwash Merino (yellow), and Mountain Meadow Suffolk, 100% down wool (red brown).



To test your yarn's feltability, pour boiling water into a small basin and add a dash of soap, any kind will do. Using rubber gloves, roll the yarn around in the palm of your hand vigorously for about 10 seconds. If it is a superfelting, you may not be able to tease the fibers apart. If it is a good felter, you will be able to pull it apart, but it will be a bit stuck to itself and lose a considerable amount of length. If it isn't a good felter, it will pull apart fairly easily and while it may be roughed up, won't lose a lot of length.



All yarns lose some length during the washing process. The Brown Sheep yarn lost over half its length and became very compact. You can no longer see the individual plies. While the others got roughed up and lost some length, they stayed largely intact, the superwash more so than the yarn made from down fiber. Down breeds, like some longwools, are known to resist felting.

Working The Seam

This seam is popularly known as the “Eskimo” seam. There is debate about the origin and meaning of this word. It has been used as a pejorative term.

If you look closely at many of the garments of the indigenous peoples of Alaska, Canada and Siberia, you will see a similar seam worked with sinew string. The sinew swells when wet, effectively closing the holes created by the

needle. There is far more to the technique than this, but it is clear to see the connection between these garments and this seam adapted for use with handwoven fabric.

This seam is worked by using a length of yarn about ten times the length of the seam. Start by working a foundational row of straight stitches, leaving a long tail. The remaining tail of yarn, is worked in and out of these stitches to seal the seam.



Back



The flap is woven in a different color, to distinguish between the body and the flap.

Front



Front

Starting at the fold, bring your yarn from the inside to the outside of the fabric, leaving a 4" tail. Tucking the tail to the inside of the fabric, work your first straight stitch from the back to the front as close to the fold as possible.

Continue working a row of small, straight stitches about ¼" from the edge, and about ⅛" long using moderate tension. The stitches should be offset in the front and back. End with the tail exiting to the front of the fabric.

Bring the tail through the first straight stitch in the front as shown here. Use moderate tension on your stitches throughout the process, keeping them snug, but not cinched too tight.



Back



Back



Front

Bring the tail to the back of the bag and slip the needle through the first straight stitch in the back.

Loop the yarn around and slip the needle through the next straight stitch.

Bring the yarn back to the front and slip the needle through the straight stitch that has already been worked.



Front



Back



Front

Loop the yarn around through the next empty straight stitch.

Bring the yarn to the back again and slip the needle through the previous straight stitch that has been worked and around through the next empty stitch.

Continue working in this way until you have worked all the straight stitches.

Ending the Seam



Your last stitch will be worked in the front. Bring your needle up and over this stitch and into the body of the bag.



Flip the fabric inside out and pull the needle and yarn through and snip. There should be two tails—beginning and ending.



Tie the two tails together and trim close, but not flush with the knot.

Working the Strap

I've experimented with many strap options. This braided cord is one of my favorites. It coordinates well with any fabric, the braid lies flat, it's lightweight, and the attachment is easy to work.



To make the strap, work a three-stranded braid. One leg is a 10' length of faux suede cord. It is available in a wide variety of colors in the craft aisle of most big box stores. The other two legs are made from three 10' lengths of warp yarn.

Tie the materials to a door knob and organize the three legs of the braid. I find it easiest to work the braid standing, but you could sit and scoot your chair back as you work.



Keeping tension on the work, start working a three stranded braid: right leg over center leg, creating a new center leg, then left leg over new center leg, creating a new center leg, repeat.

About every three or four repetitions, reorganize the legs so it doesn't become too tangled to work the braid. As the braid grows, step back to keep tension on the yarn. When you reach the end, tie an overhand knot. Untie from the door handle and tie another overhand knot.

Securing the Strap

Secure the strap to the bag by using a length of warp yarn and a tapestry needle. Placing the knot at the top of one side of the bag, fold where it meets the flap. You want the knot placed entirely on the body of the bag, so you don't stitch it to the strap.

Using the needle and thread, wrap the yarn around the base of the knot and through the bag a few times. Then working from the inside of the bag, bring the yarn up to the top of the knot and work a few more stitches.

Bring the last stitch from the front to the back, fold the fabric back so you can work from the inside. Secure the yarn by wrapping the yarn around the stitches in the inside of the bag, then knot.



Wrapped stitches securing the strap. The stitches on top of the knot aren't visible.

Finished Bag



The finished bag, front and back. I wove half the fabric in the warp yarn and half with a coordinating solid. I don't really worry about measuring, although if I'm going to change the flap color, I try to do so about 5"-6" from the end so the flap and top fold is one color and the body of the fabric is another.

You can trim the fringe closer to the knots to create bobbles instead of felted fringe, or cut above the knots for a cleaner finish. If you trim the knots off entirely, I recommend working a blanket stitch or some other decorative stay stitch at the flap to keep the fabric from fraying with wear.

Project Ideas



There are a number of patterns in *Weaving Made Easy*, including the Fully Woven Scarf and the Bobbled Slippers. If you have the first edition, it also included a coaster pattern with needlefelted flowers.



This mini cupcake was made by cutting a 5" square and stuffing it with the trimmed fringe of the felted fabric and bits of loom waste. It is loosely stitched on the bottom to hold the stuffing in place. Mini silicone cupcake holders formed the base and a few round-headed pins serve as sprinkles.



Cute, quirky, stuffed creatures make me smile. The Aranzi Aranzo company's book, *Cute Dolls*, included a pattern for the bunny shown here. I call it my Thrums Buns. It is stuffed with loom waste called "thrums". You can also find some super cute patterns at Shiny, Happy, World website. Once you start looking, you will see felt-friendly patterns



This little tree is made by cutting a series of circles starting at 3", then gradually decreasing the diameter of each successive circle. A large 8" US size 13 doublepointed knitting needle forms the trunk. The circles are speared through by the knitting needle. The needle is set in a small ceramic pot and filled with soil and pebbles to form the base. The soil makes the trunk a little bit more stable than pebbles on their own.



Use a giant cookie cutter to create different shapes. I use these as catch-alls for my needles and to send heart-felt missives to anyone who needs a pick-me-up or a little appreciation.

While I was working on Knitting Daily TV, I designed small felted bag with magnet closures. You can find a link to the pattern on my website under Resources/Articles by Liz.

