Direct warping with Tablet weaving.

By Ava del Mas.

Please note; this article assumes that you have a basic knowledge of Tablet weaving and have tried it once or twice. I apologize to anyone new to tablet weaving, but can only encourage that you find someone to show you as soon as you can, as it’s a fun, easy and documentable way to decorate your garb.

This warping technique was shown to me by a local member of my spinners and weavers group. It’s a simple technique that means you can warp up your loom in 15 mins instead of it taking 2 hours.

Direct warping only works for tablet weaving where most or all of the cards are set up the same. I have used it for simple plain patterns and the basic Egyptian diamonds threaded in pattern. I imagine it would work wonderfully for double-faced weave and brocaded tablet weaving where the background is all one colour. If you try it out on these techniques I would love to hear your results. This technique is not really useful for threaded in patterns, but could be adapted somewhat, but that would take another article to explain.

I use an inkle loom for tablet weaving, but this technique can be just as easily done on a flat loom, or in between two warping pegs or chairs.

To begin you need 4 lots of thread. If it’s an economical thread you can buy 4 skeins or balls. In my example with hand-dyed silk, I carefully measured it out and cut it in quarters creating 4 skeins.

Set the 4 balls up in separate ice-cream containers or jam jars at your feet so that when you draw the thread out they will not tangle. Take your tablet weaving cards and make them into a nice tidy stack so all the holes line up. Take your 4 thread ends and thread them through the stack of cards so that the stack is still intact but the thread is through all the cards.

A nice chenille needle can help you getting the thread through your stack of cards if they are as roughly mismatched and homemade looking as mine.
Tie the 4 threads to your 1st warping peg/point. Draw the cards, as a stack down towards the other warping point, drop a card, and keep dragging the rest of the stack letting the thread run through them.

End it tied and the first card is dropped in the warp, the rest of he card stack travels around the warping board or loom.

Keep running the stack around your warping board and back over the starting peg. You need to keep a nice tension here so that the warp is even. You are using the stack of cards to help you keep that tension even. As you go back around the first warping peg and come to the place where you left the last card suspended in the warp, leave another card and go around the warping pegs again.

The warp forming after a few wraps around the warping board or loom. You can see the stack of remaining card on their travel around the bottom of the warping board.

Do you see what’s happening? Each time you go around the warping peg you leave another card and all your cards will be warped with even tension, they will be nicely lined up and they will all be finished in 10 mins, if your 4 threads don’t tangle. Now you can see that arranging your 4 spools so they can run freely is the most important thing you can do to keep this method quick and stress free. Once you have placed all your cards suspended in the warp, you untie the first end of your thread, and re-tie it to the other end of your thread and chop. This will create an odd looking cross in the warp along your first peg.
If you’d like a contrasting border on your tablet weaving this is easy to add. You do the same thing with your contrasting colour *next to* your first colour, or you can tie the new colour to the old colour, either method works fine. You thread your contrasting cards all together, tie one end to the warping peg and around you go, warping up your contrasting colour next to your main colour. So for in my example I started off with 15 gold threaded-cards and 4 red threaded. Once I had warped up my red thread I tied the two red ends together. When I say this I mean that you take all 4 threads of each end and tie them together in a bundle. “But this is not a border”, you say! “It’s a stripe on the end!”

But it’s a simple matter to lift the red cards and gently place two at either end. I placed mine so that I had 2 gold cards, 2 red cards, 11 gold, 2 red and 2 gold. Where the ends of the warp are tied together looks a bit odd, but I assure you it will not make any difference in the weaving, the cross will stay in the waste part of your warp.

Now is the time to decide if you want you cards s or z warped. That means, if you want the threads going into the cards from the left, or from the right. I chose to alternate the cards so that once it was woven it would have a series of nice little v’s similar to stockinette stitch in knitting. I went through and flipped over (not turned, but flipped the card from left to right) every second card so that my warp is now alternating s and z warped.
Check your thread so make sure that they are not tangles or that card 2 is not sitting on the base threads of card 3 etc, grab your weft and start weaving!

If you are not using a loom you may like to secure your cards close to the end near the cross in the warp and cut them so you can use a belt strap technique of weaving. You'll find if you do this the cross disappears anyways, but if you cut so that the cross-tied ends are right at the beginning of your weaving in front of your cards, you can use this thread to tie your securing knot and therefore you will have less waste.

This technique is much easier to show than to explain. If you have any further questions or would like to book a demonstration I can be contacted via **ava@bordernet.com.au**

Happy weaving,
Lady Ava del Mas.
Canton of Cairnfell, Barony of Stormhold