

# Practical Weaving Suggestions

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# HANDWOVEN BEDSPREADS

By Berta Frey

Every weaver should weave at least one bed-spread before she dies. It was the bed-spread or "kivver" which kept handweaving alive after the advent of the industrial era and it was the old spreads which inspired so much of the weaving in the early days of the modern revival of handweaving. It is an article of universal appeal—all of us can use a spread of one sort or another, whether on a bed in an honest-to-goodness bed room, or on a studio couch.

In a New England salt-box type of house and on a four-poster, there is nothing lovelier than the traditional Chariot Wheel, Youth and Beauty, Gentleman's Fancy or such other romantically named patterns. In a modern flat roofed ranch type house and on a Hollywood bed, Chariot Wheel is about as appropriate as catsup on apple pie! Some of the old tufted spreads are as beautiful and as appropriate today and as useful as they were a century and more ago. Look through any department store and see the meticulous copies that are being made.

Here is shown a coverlet and directions given for it that is in tune with the times and can be adapted to almost any surroundings. It is simple enough to fit any style or period decoration. The draft might be adjusted to eliminate the plain stripes and if done in dark color, it would be suitable for a studio couch. Being woven of Lily's Floss (Art. 114) there is a tremendous range of color from white and dainty tints for a fluffy-ruffles type of room to deep and vivid tones for a "Moderne" room.

The weave used is for that type of fabric which is usually known as "Swedish Lace". In this case the blocks have been combined and in this form it is sometimes called "turned" lace. Here it is sleyed at 20 per inch and with such a close sley, the lace like quality is less obvious. It may be woven equally well on a counterbalanced or a jack-type loom and because both sides are so nearly identical, there is no need to be bothered with transposing the tie-up or the treadling.

The directions and drafts are made for a twin size bed—39 inches wide and 15 to 21 inches high. The measurements are quite ample, for the material is heavy enough that if two or three inches lie on the floor, it will look "luxurious"—or so the Decorators tell us. I've not been able to find a glamorous synonym for a skimpy looking spread. And in cotton material, shrinkage is inevitable.

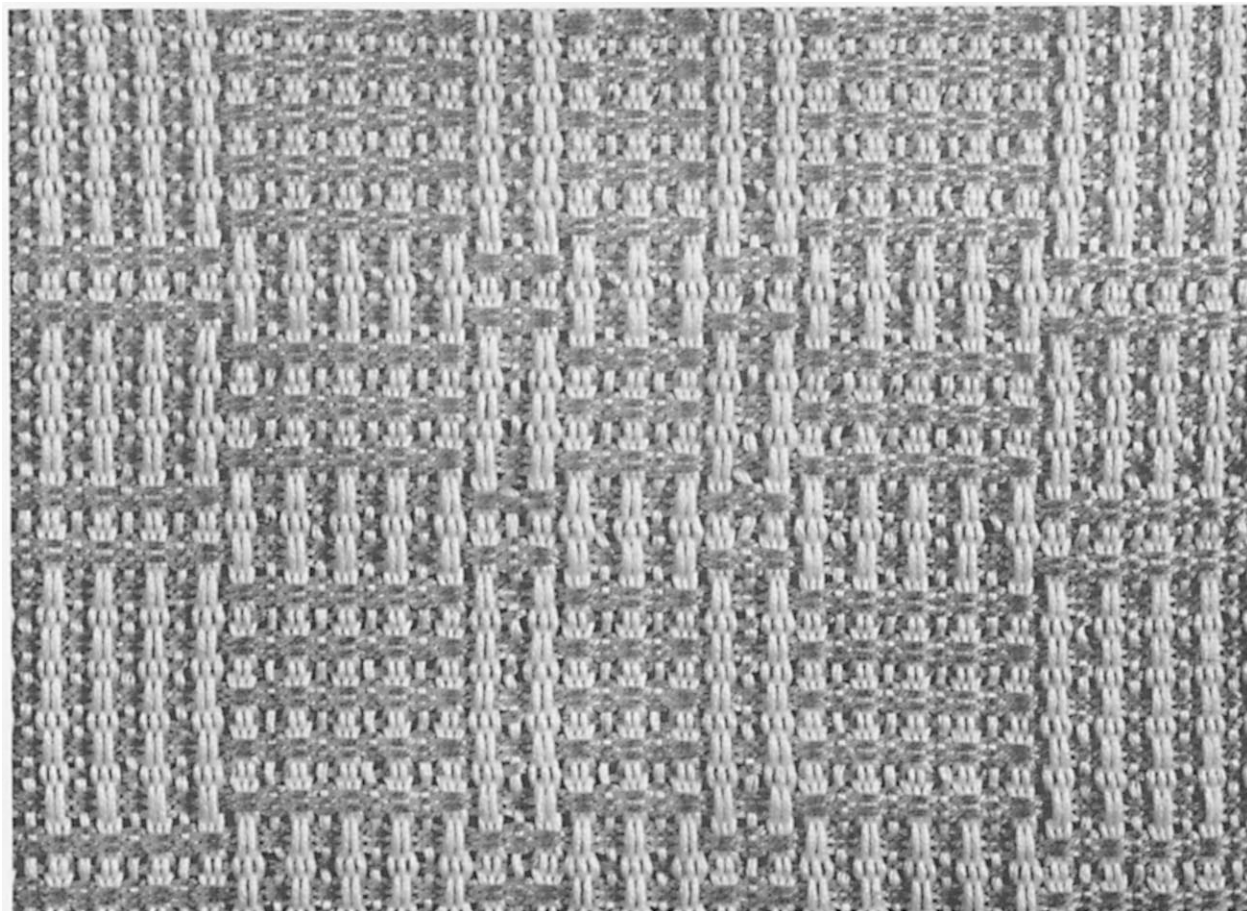
The old coverlets were woven in two pieces and were put together with a seam down the middle. If the weaving were evenly done, the elaborate pattern helped to disguise the seam. In today's sleek styles, a seam down the middle would be unthinkable so we design our modern spreads with two seams and make the seams be part of the design. The weave used here is especially good in this respect for it is possible to thread a sel-

vage narrow enough to make the piecing almost invisable or wide enough to be a trim or a border.

This decorative seam plan means that the weaver who has a loom less than 40 inches wide can weave as handsome a spread on a 20 inch or a 30 inch loom. Of course, the narrow strips mean weaving more yards, but it does not mean a pieced or scrappy looking spread.

In the following directions, no length is given for making the warps. Different looms will have different amounts of loom waste. But don't be stingy in figuring the warp length. If some warp is left over, it is easy enough to weave a pillow top or dresser scarf or what-not; but it is a tragedy to have one strip even three inches short. The whole spread would have to be shortened or a new warp of three or more yards made. The length will depend too, on how the spread is to be used. If it is not to cover the pillows and if the bed has a foot-board, a finished spread of two and one-half yards will be ample. Both sides of the fabric are so nearly alike that the spread can be taken the full length of the bed, the pillows placed on top of it, the end brought over and on top of the pillows to be tucked under. In this case at least three and one-half yards will be needed. Probably the most practical length will be somewhere between these two extremes.

**Close-Up of Bedspread**



On a 40-inch loom, we will weave two strips 40 inches wide. There will be only one warp made, but it must be long enough to allow for cutting off the first length and at least partially rethreading to make the second length, which is cut down the center to make the two side panels. On a 30-inch loom, we will weave three lengths, each  $27\frac{1}{2}$  inches wide. One length will be woven in pattern and the other two for the side pieces will be partially rethreaded to make a band of tabby along one edge. On the 20-inch loom, we will weave five lengths. Three will be 20 inches wide and woven in pattern; two will be ten inches wide in the loom and woven in tabby. This will mean two separate warps. It is a temptation to weave a 20 inch plain strip and cut it in half, but that really is not successful. The edges would have to be hemmed and would not join so invisibly to the patterned panel next to it. Even with the neatest of hems and seams, the weight of the fabric is likely to pull and eventually fray the hemmed edge. Selvages are much more satisfactory.

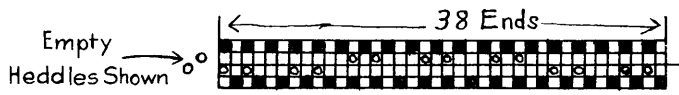
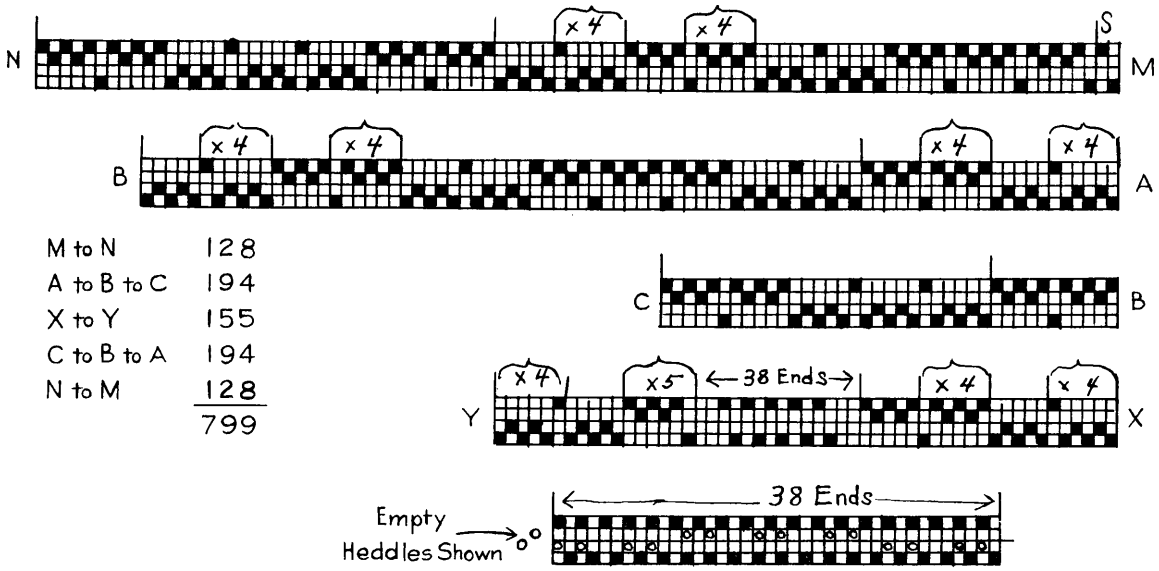
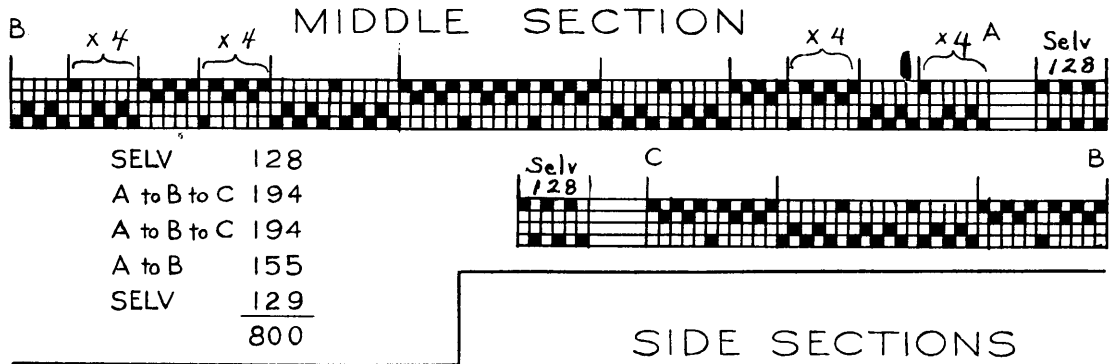
The three drafts given are for the same pattern, or weave, but for three different widths of looms. The sections of the drafts A to B to C are exactly alike in all three widths. That part of the draft is not drawn out in detail in the draft for the 20-inch loom. It is perhaps the easiest spread, for there is no rethreading. Three strips are woven in pattern and then a narrow warp made and woven in tabby for the two plain bands.

The number of warp ends is given on each draft and always for 20 ends per inch. On the draft for the 40 inch loom, one draft calls for 800 ends and the other for 799—this is just one of those oddities that often happen when adding up the several sections that make up a full width. It is a paper problem only, for in actual weaving that extra end is added to the selvage of the M - N section and it makes no difference in the finished piece.

The middle section of the 40-inch fabric is woven in pattern with plain woven bands along both sides. The two side sections are woven in one piece with a narrow band of tabby in the middle where the two side panels are cut apart.

**THREADING NOTES.** For the 40-inch loom, thread the side section length first. When threading the M to N section, after every heddle threaded on harness No. 2, leave an empty heddle on harness No. 4; and after every heddle threaded on harness No. 3, leave an empty heddle on harness No. 1. When rethreading for the middle section it will not be necessary to pull out all of the 128 ends for the plain band. Merely change the warp ends from the heddles on harnesses No. 2 and No. 3 to the empty heddles waiting for them on harnesses No. 1 and No. 4. At the heddle on No. 4 next to N on the draft, tie a red thread. This will save hunting for the proper place when the time comes to rethread. The same process is followed when threading from N to M.

In the center of the side sections piece, there is a space of 38 ends threaded to weave



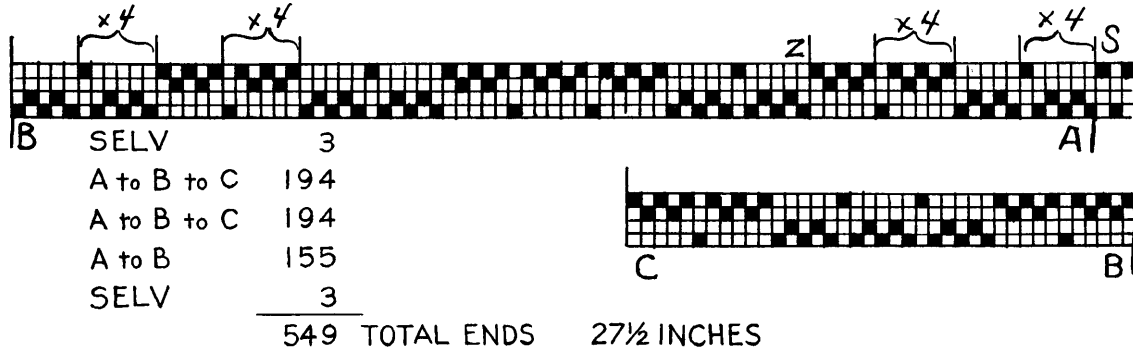
**Draft for 40 Inch Loom**

tabby. When threading this section, empty heddles are left on the No. 2 and No. 3 harnesses so that those ends can be easily rethreaded to the proper pattern without interrupting the rhythm of the design.

At M only two ends are marked for selvage, but actually the first four warps will weave as selvage. A narrow selvage will join to the plain band and be more nearly invisible than a wider selvage.

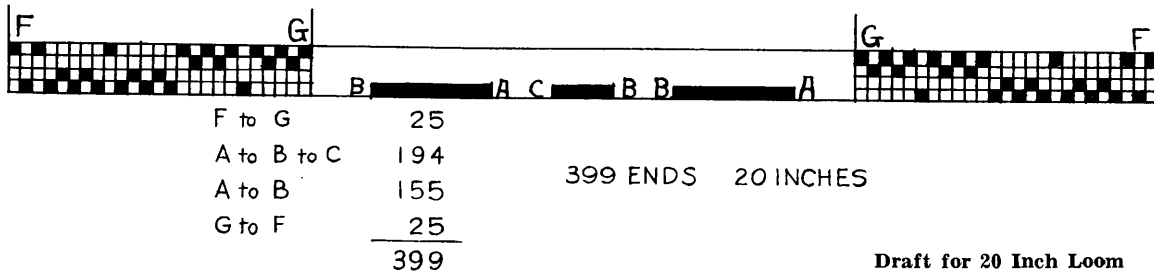
When threading the 30-inch loom, thread A to B to C twice. Then thread A to Z and mark that heddle with a little red flag. From Z to B, empty heddles can be left on the No. 4 harness after every heddle threaded on the No. 2 harness and an empty on No. 1 after every threaded No. 3. These will be the heddles that are rethreaded to make the plain bands on the side panels.

When weaving on the 20-inch loom, the warp does not need rethreading on the loom. It calls for a new warp in a narrow width and woven in tabby.

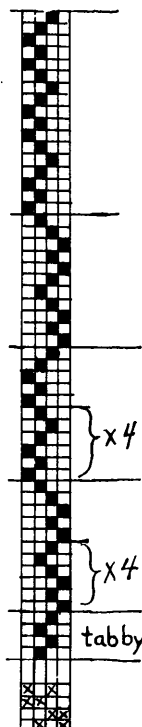


Draft for 30 Inch Loom

THE TIE-UP for this weave could not possibly be more simple. Only four treadles, or four combinations of harnesses are needed. Tabby is woven on the 1-3 and 2-4 combinations. There are only two "pattern" combinations, the 1-2 and the 3-4. Although in any given area, the warps make the overshot on one side and the wefts make it on the opposite side, the over-all appearance of the fabric is identical on both sides. It is not necessary to be bothered with a different tie-up for a falling shed than for a rising shed.



Draft for 20 Inch Loom



TREADLING too, is very simple. The pattern part is woven in units of six shots each. Units are repeated as needed to make the blocks of the pattern. The shuttle will go from right to left always on the same two sheds and from left to right on the opposite two sheds. The unit of treadling is: pattern, tabby, pattern, tabby, tabby. If we consider 1-2, 2-4, 1-2, 2-4, 1-3, 2-4 to be the A unit of treadling and 3-4, 1-3, 3-4, 1-3, 2-4, 1-3 to be the B unit, then the complete treadling for one repeat of the pattern is: A five times, B five times, A two times, B three times, A two times, B five times, A five times, B two times, A three times, B two times.

When changing from one unit to the next, the sixth shot is omitted. A small portion of the treadling draft is given to show this transition from one unit to the next.

Treadling Draft

It is the very simplicity of the treading that makes it necessary to watch the weaving carefully as we go along. I once had to go back six inches because I had woven units of 5, 5, 5, 2, 3, 2. And another time I went back even farther because I had treadled the units in the sequence of 5, 5, 2, 3, 2, 3, 2. The sequence is **always** 5, 5, 2, 3, 2.

The pattern part is a thicker fabric than the tabby edge or edges. As it winds on to the cloth beam, the pattern part will make a larger roll than the thinner tabby part. If allowed to go too far, this could make all kinds of trouble with the tension, and of course, ruin the whole spread. Wind stiff paper on the cloth beam with the finished work and there will be no trouble. The paper must be stiff enough so that it will hold the tabby section up and not allow it to crush down. A soft paper such as newsprint is utterly useless, but a heavy grade of brown wrapping paper will be satisfactory.

FINISHING this spread is almost fool-proof. So often good weaving is spoiled by poor finishing. But there is little in this spread that can go wrong, for there are only two seams, and if they are not allowed to pucker, there is nothing else to spoil. The spreads woven on the 20-inch and the 30-inch looms need only to be whipped together selvage to selvage. The lengths should be basted or pinned together closely. There is more take-up in the tabby part of the weave than in the pattern part, and consequently the pattern part will look slightly rippled when it comes off the loom, but pressing will take care of this.

The spread woven on the 40-inch loom takes a bit more finishing. First take the length woven for the side panels. There is a band of tabby about two inches wide down the center of this length, mark the center warp, or pull it out as a guide. Stitch on the sewing machine with small stitches along both sides of the center warp. After it is stitched, cut the two halves apart and hem the edges immediately. The fabric does ravel and hemming first will save future trouble. I think it is not considered the orthodox way of doing it, but I like to use the floss that I have used for weaving to do the sewing—the stitches show less. Next sew the selvages of the narrow strip to the selvages of the center strip—one on each side. Lastly, hem the two ends.

For a full width bed, three widths would be needed on the 40-inch loom. Use the draft for the side sections, but instead of the 38 ends of tabby down the center, thread those ends in pattern; this will make the full 40 inches of pattern. For the side panels, thread the M - N section in tabby on one side only and weave two lengths. For the 30-inch loom, weave three panels in full width of pattern and make two separate tabby strips twelve inches wide.

Woven on a 20-inch loom, the spread for a full width bed would be very frankly a striped spread and would not fit in so many rooms as easily as the more simple spread. The draft might be adjusted to weave approximately 14 inches of pattern with six inches of plain along one edge. Six strips would have to be woven, but leave the tabby off of the last length, so that the two sides will be the same.

STATISTICS. The standard widths for beds are as follows: a single bed is 36 inches wide; a twin size is 39 inches, three-quarter size is 48 inches and a full width bed is 54 inches wide.

The finished spread for a twin size bed weighs just under five pounds. Eleven pounds of Floss would probably weave the pair, but six pounds should be bought for a single or one twin bed. Cutting off one length and rethreading makes for extra loom waste. When weaving a pair, there would be no more waste than for one. The side sections for both spreads would be woven before cutting and rethreading for the two center sections. There probably would be little difference in the amount of yarn needed no matter what the width of the loom.

A test length was woven to test for shrinkage. It measured 40 inches in the loom and when it came off the loom it measured 38 inches. The length that had measured one yard on the loom measured 34 inches when the tension was released. There is tremendous take-up in this weave. The test sample was taken to the neighborhood cleaners to be steam-pressed. It shrank little if any in the width, but lost an inch in length. Next it was washed and again pressed on the steam table. This time it measured 36½ inches wide and 31½ inches long.

At first glance, the measurements given for the spreads on all looms appear to be much too wide. But shrinkage and take-up can't be ignored. If the finished spread is too wide, the sides can always be hemmed back and later can be let out like a little girl's skirt hem. The bed does not grow, but the spread does shrink.

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