

weaversbazaar wool yarns tested as warps

We are often asked if our wool yarns can be used as warp and although we have tried it ourselves with no insurmountable problems, we concluded it would be the best idea to ask three independent weavers to try a range of our wools and tell us how they performed as warp.

In summary the conclusions are generally positive, and all the wools tested are strong enough to use as warp but the testers have uncovered some aspects of their use to take into consideration. This article discusses these considerations and shows the results the testers achieve with small samples.

What was tested;

These are the weaversbazaar yarns that were tested as warp

- 18/2 fine wool
- 9.5/2 medium 1 wool
- 7/2 medium 2 wool
- 6/2 heavy wool
- 5/2 heavy wool

All samples made were 10 x 10 cm or less

What to consider when picking your wool warp and weft

Our testers found that matching the warp and the weft thicknesses was important. Trying to weave with a heavy yarn weft on a very fine warp does not work well once the piece is off the loom. It is as if the weft completely dominates and the edges are difficult to control.

If the weft is too light for the sett then a similar outcome is seen for example when 18/2 fine yarn is used as warp on an 8 epi sett. Off the loom the corners curl up, the slits open off the loom and there is a general lack of cohesion between the warp and the weft – the warp can easily be pulled out and the cloth is literally falling apart. This is shown in the sample Dunes (right) woven by Martina Mueller (18/2 single warp and weft at 8 epi). If the design (or circumstance) calls for a mismatch between weight of warp and sett and particularly if the warp is finer then consider using a double or treble warp to compensate and be prepared to block the finished piece.



Here are some suggested setts using wool as a double warp

- 2 or 3 epc using 5/2 or 6/2 wool
- 3 epc using 7/2
- 4 epc using 9.5/2
- 5 epc using 18/2



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When weaving on a double warp use the same weight of yarn in 2 strands for weft and the result should be quite balanced. Here is an example from Robyn Tanchrum of a Bluebird (left) woven on a 7/2 wool with 7/2 wool weft using a four selvedge warping technique

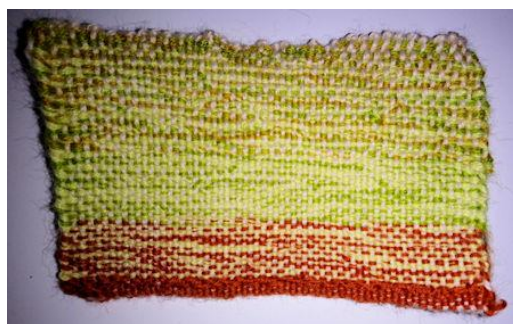


Having a heavy warp and a fine weft can work together creating a good smooth surface. This is shown in the sample – Heather Landscape (right) by Martina Mueller (6/2 single warp and 18/2 weft as 3 strands together, 8epi)



Using a fine warp with a variety of weft weights can work but again presents challenges as seen in Lorna Davidson-Morrish's piece (left) where she has used an 18/2 warp with a variety of different weft thicknesses up to a heavy weight at the top. Lorna has compensated for the changing weft thicknesses with her weaving tension, but the top is quite uneven due to the difference between the thin warp and thick weft.

Lorna also experimented with the 5/2 warp and using single, double and triple weft strands (right) and the impact can be seen in the



density of the weave. This work illustrates some of the variety of effects it is possible to get but just changing the weft thickness.

So, if using different weight wools for warp and weft it is necessary to match the weight of the wool warp to the sett by double or treble warping or by choosing a heavier warp and to match the weight of the weft to the warp by increasing the threads in the bundle.



These principles are nicely illustrated by the piece to the left woven by Robyn Tanchrum (9.5/2 double warp using 3 strands weft, 9 epi). This piece was warped as a fringeless tapestry at high tension and the double warp was sometimes split to single warp to give more definition.

Bear in mind that the weaversbazaar 6/2 heavy yarn is much hairier than the weaversbazaar 5/2 yarn. This does not seem to make much difference for the warp but if you like a smooth surface ensure you use the 5/2 yarn. If you like a more textured surface the 6/2 is the one to use. However, the hairiness of the 6/2 when

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used as warp can catch the weft when weaving. Similarly, the 7/2 medium is silkier than the 9.5/2 medium although neither are particularly hairy.

As wool is far softer than linen, cotton and even silk, when using it as a warp it may not be possible to have as high a tension. It may also have a tendency to slightly buckle particularly with a lower than normal weaving tension and if you are weaving shapes. Raise the tension on the warp if possible, to counteract this and pay even closer attention to your weft tension when weaving. An example of the buckling is shown to the right on a sample woven by Lorna Davidson-Morrish using 5/2 wool as warp at 9 epi and a finer weft.



When tying off wool warp can be very neat and tidy but this is harder to control the heavier the wool warp that is used.

Other comments suggested the silkier the wool, (e.g. the weaversbazaar single fleece black-faced Leicester yarn), the slippier it was when knotting but this seemed easy to overcome by using permanent rather than slip knots.

Positive points raised by the testers

Comments from our testers using wool on wool (warp and weft) suggested there was an adhesion created between the warp and the weft giving the tapestry a good integrity.

On the whole the wool warp was able to hold quite a bit of tension and was suitable for double warping too. No testers reported any warp breakages. This strength is a feature of worsted-spun yarn which has a high level of twist and long fibres. Using knitting yarns as warp could be problematic as they cannot take as much tension. Even when working with a worsted-spun wool warp it cannot be put under as much tension as cotton or linen warp as it will stretch at some point and need frequent additional tensioning (take care though as the wool could eventually pull apart) or a slacker weave.

There were no reports of 'wear' on the warps as the weaving took place. Using both wooden and metal topped bobbins as well as a heavy beater did not cause any fraying or wearing on the warps. So it seems worsted wool is resilient to the weaving process.

It was also commented that after washing a wool warp wool weft tapestry, its feel was soft and the resultant fabric was both soft and had a slight drape to it which is not found with cotton or linen warp which create very rigid fabric. So, this might be a useful feature for some projects or to be aware of for others.

Given that worsted wool can work as warp it provides a whole new dimension for tapestry with the wide range of colours and thicknesses that are colour fast. The colour of the warp does influence the final colour of a tapestry in subtle ways even though the weft may completely cover it so if you want

The logo for 'weaversbazaar' features a small square icon on the left composed of several vertical stripes in various shades of red and orange. To the right of this icon, the word 'weaversbazaar' is written in a large, lowercase, sans-serif font. The 'w' and 'e' are in a lighter blue-grey color, while 'aversbazaar' is in a darker blue-grey color.

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an overall bright tapestry use a bright warp and if you want an atmospheric tapestry use an atmospheric colour of warp. A dark warp in a bright tapestry will subdue the colours of the weft.

A very big thank you to our warp testers

- Lorna Davidson-Morrish UK
- Martina Mueller UK
- Robyn Tanchrum USA

Lin Squires. February 2019