



WIDENING OUT!

with or without a warp stretcher or temple

The function of a stretcher is to maintain the weaving width. How it gets used, and for which weaves, varies somewhat for different people. We asked eight experienced weavers for their views and experiences.

Mariana Eriksson

I USE A STRETCHER on all weaves that do not naturally maintain the weaving width, i.e. not on repp or warps of more rigid material such as paper yarn.

THE STRETCHER HELPS keep the ends evenly distributed. Without a stretcher, you risk the ends bunching together and damaging the reed.

When weaving rag rugs, you get a much better beat with a stretcher in place.

Mariana Eriksson, handweaver, former weave tutor and lecturer in handweaving at Uppsala University.

Ingrid Skagerström

I PREFER WEAVING as far as possible without a stretcher, which obscures the cloth and can leave unsightly marks. Instead, I am careful with how I place the weft and tension the warp.

THERE ARE WEAVES, though, for which I always use a stretcher: rag rugs, cotton and woollen cloths, partly because the stretcher reduces the wear and tear on the edge ends, protects the reed as well as maintains the weaving width.

Ingrid Skagerström, handweaver, former weave tutor.

Anna Svenstedt

I USE A STRETCHER AS LITTLE as possible. I feel it takes up extra time, the cloth can't be seen very well and the edges do not always benefit after being pierced by the sharp pins. The weaving can sometimes get a bit wavy.

HOWEVER, a stretcher is very often necessary when weaving a linen warp.

And it is a must for rug weaving, plaids and other cloths where the weft is a little more elastic.

Anna Svenstedt, handweaver.

Lillemor Johansson

I ALWAYS USE A STRETCHER. To maintain the width and for good edges. I move it forward frequently. It is important to place it correctly. What I would like is a stretcher, that allows you to see the last little section of weaving and so avoid shedding errors being discovered too late, for example in linen weaves and damask. I always leave the stretcher in place when I have stopped weaving. This is also something I recommend when there are several people weaving one after the other on any one warp.

Lillemor Johansson, handweaver and weave tutor.

Winnie Poulsen

A STRETCHER IS A MUST. It holds the cloth out, so the edge ends don't get worn and torn. The edge ends can be put under extra tension with the help of weights suspended from S-hooks below the warp beam.

Move the stretcher forward every 5 cm.

When advancing the warp, leave the stretcher in place by the fell, so that the last picks woven are always kept straight. Without a stretcher, the cloth tends to want to draw in and if you tension the warp after it has drawn in, you risk ruining the edge when replacing the stretcher in the cloth that has drawn in.

If the stretcher is not left in place when advancing the warp, you get a curve in the middle of the cloth.

Leave the stretcher in place when stopping weaving and leave the warp under tension, otherwise it can prove difficult to get exactly the same tension again. Once the cloth has been woven, it can relax – not while it is being woven. The teeth in the stretcher should suit the particular cloth: finer teeth for fabric, long and fat teeth for rugs.

MANY PATTERNS, such as for damask, do well with a stretcher when the last few woven centimetres of the cloth are meant to be visible. If you know a good blacksmith and can buy the teeth separately, you can make your own. Linen warps and singles warps are unthinkable without a stretcher.

Winnie Poulsen, handweaver and weave tutor.

Karin Wallin

I TEND TO USE A STRETCHER most of the time, as I think it better to keep the ends spread out so the cloth is as wide as in the reed. It helps me keep an eye on both warp and weft.

I RARELY USE A STRETCHER when weaving smaller, sample weaves or experimental cloths.

The advice I generally gave my students was to use a stretcher when weaving on a linen warp and otherwise, test out what works. Some liked using a stretcher, others did not go for it. I thought it was important that they formed their own opinion. My experience is that this is quite an individual matter, whether to use or not use a stretcher.

Karin Wallin is a handweaver and former weave tutor at Umeå University.

Marie Ekstedt Bjersing

A STRETCHER IS USED to keep the warp ends straight. It is important for three main reasons:

- It reduces wear on the warp ends.
- It reduces strain on the weaver's shoulders, as there is no extra resistance when beating down on ends that run straight.
- To protect the reed.

Which factors have a bearing on whether a stretcher is needed or not? (no particular order).

- **The warp material** (e.g. linen can be more susceptible to wear and tear).
- **The weave** (e.g. plain weave, which some times weaves up fine without a stretcher).
- **Warp sett** (a stretcher is not necessarily required for a denser or high sett).
- **Weft sett** (with a low sett, a stretcher is not always needed).
- **The way the bobbins of weft are wound** (looser bobbins of cotton and wool do not always require the use of a stretcher).
- **Warp tension** (with a less taut warp, a stretcher is not always needed).
- **The width** of the weave.

Marie Ekstedt Bjersing, handweaver and weave tutor at Sätergläntan Institute of Crafts.

Kerstin Lovallius

I NEARLY ALWAYS use a stretcher, with the exception of repp, where there could be a tendency to spread out instead of draw in.

A stretcher makes a difference to the quality of the cloth. Beating down is so much easier. If the cloth has begun drawing in, it is hard to keep to the weft sett required. When a stretcher is not used for weaving horizontal stripes, the latter turn u-shaped, something I see frequently on rag rugs. In fact, this has to do with skimping on the weft. Open weave and spaced weave curtaining is so much more lovely if a stretcher is used, along with an extra wide, denser sett selvage. Mostly I use a classic type of wood stretcher, but I also like those made of metal, which give better control for weaving the cloth. However, when using a metal stretcher, take care not to weave too close to the batten, as the lower part supporting the reed could get damaged.

Kerstin Lovallius, handweaver and former weave tutor for the Professional Weaver Training in Upplands Väsby.

above left / Temple for narrow cloths in metal from Toika. There are also other widths available.

TOIKA.COM

below left / Temple for wider cloths in wood from GAV Glimåkra. There are different widths available.

GAVGLIMAKRA.SE

above right / Winnie Poulsen made her own temple: "A smith made the pieces in metal, I bought teeth that I mounted in a piece of oak that was screwed on the metal."

below right / Stretchers used by weavers in India.

POSITIONING THE STRETCHER

- Place the stretcher upside down on the cloth, so that half the teeth are against the outermost warp ends.
- Turn the stretcher and insert the holding pin to fix the width required on the stretcher.
- Position the stretcher a little way in from the edge. How far depends on the particular cloth. The finer and denser the cloth, the closer to the edge the stretcher can be placed, but far enough in so as not to snap the edge.
- If you think that the teeth go deep down in the fabric, you can put a piece of cloth or elastic rubber band over them.