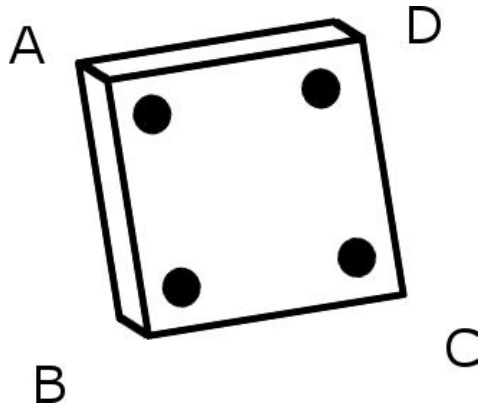


Quick start guide to tablet weaving

This guide is intended to be read through before starting. It is not a step-by-step instruction guide.

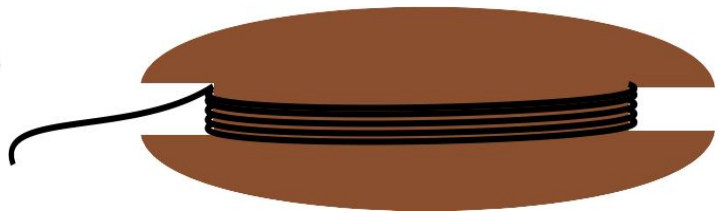
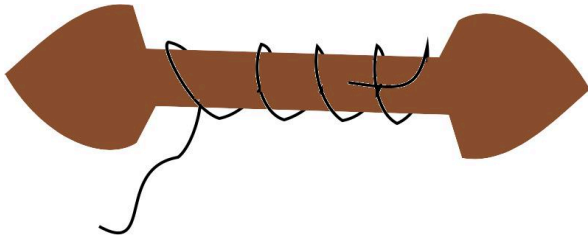
Threading the tablets

For the purpose of this quick start guide, I am assuming square, four-holed tablets, or cards, that each carry four threads.



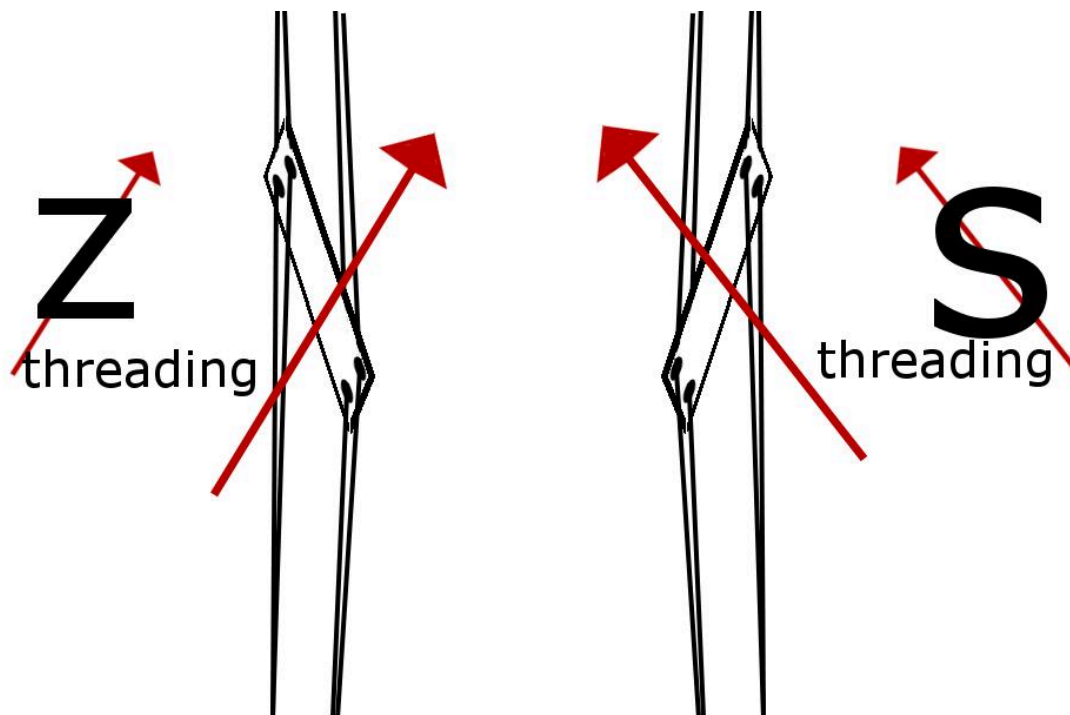
Also make sure you have to hand:

- a knife or pair of scissors to cut the threads
- something to use for beating the threads such as a cutlery knife or other thin blade with a blunt edge
- a shuttle. You can make one out of cardboard or a stick, it holds the weft thread. If it has a long straight edge, it can double as a beater as well as a shuttle.



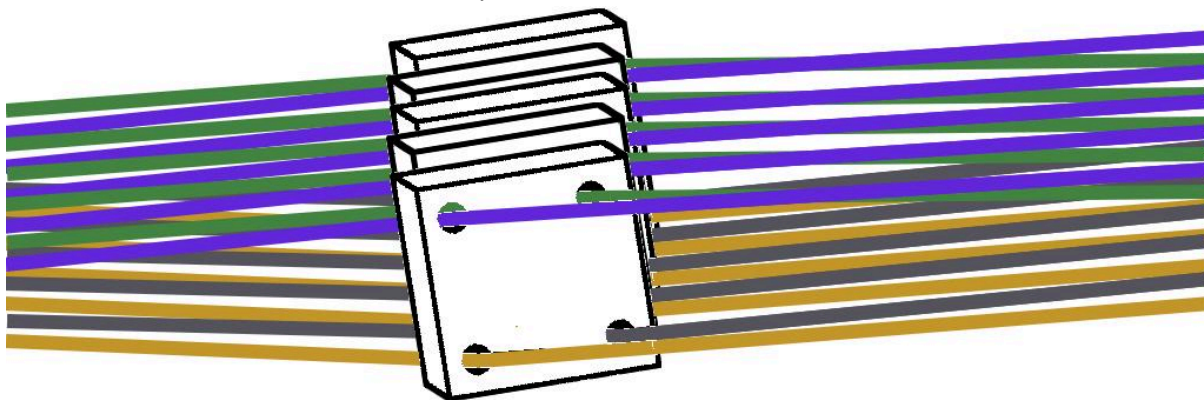
- some string or an elastic band to tie the pack of tablets when you want to stop in the middle of a weaving project
- a belt or piece of string tied around the waist to act as one end of the loom
- a stationary object such as a small tree or post in the ground that can act as the other end of the loom (you can use a foot as the other end of the loom, but my joints start to ache if I do it this way!!)
- thread to weave with. Cotton (used for crocheting and tapestries) is an easy thread to start with as it doesn't tend to tangle or fray very easily. It comes in different thicknesses – 5/2 makes quite a nice weave. 8/2 is a little thin. 3/2 for a thicker weave. However, any thread that will fit through the holes in your tablets will do including wool, silk, linen. The length of thread you use for the warp must be 1/5 longer than you want the finished product to be with another 30cm added for tying the ends and suchlike.

Each of four threads must pass through each tablet, one per hole. The following diagram, which views the tablets from the top, shows each tablet can be positioned in one of two ways known as S or Z threading:



You can turn the cards about their vertical axis to swap between S or Z threading before beginning weaving, however, care should be taken if using more than 2 colours in a tablet that the colours are through the correct holes to be able to get them into the starting position. If all the cards are threaded the same way then the weave will tend to twist. To prevent this for this particular band, make sure the tablets alternate between S and Z threading.

For this weave, use two different colours with two threads of each colour in each tablet. Two threads of the same colour should be adjacent to each other (i.e. not on the diagonals). A pattern for threading the tablets is described in detail later. The outside tablets should have 4 threads of one colour only to act as a border. You will need to thread 12 tablets. The threads should be tied to the waist band at one end, threaded through the tablets and be tied to something stationary such as a post or tree at the other end so that all the tablets are held taught on the threads. You can alter the tension by leaning back or forward. You should end up with all the tablets threaded and aligned next to each other and aim to have every thread under similar tension.



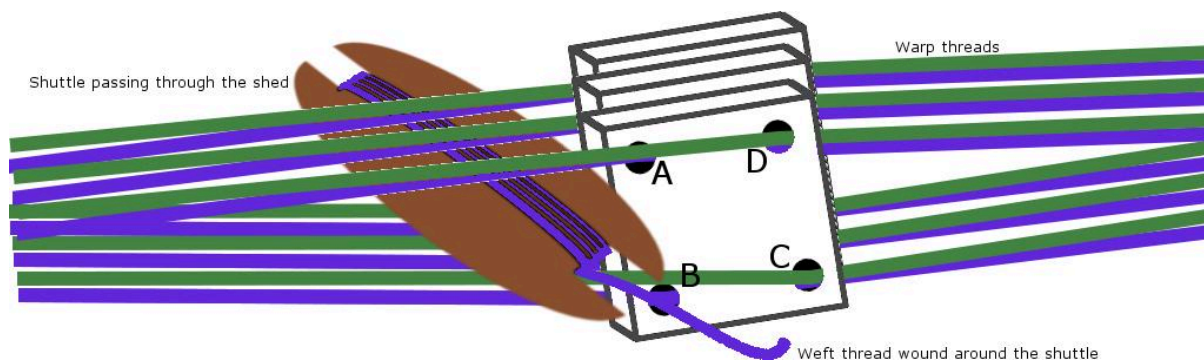
Continuous warp is a quick way to do this and is worth investigating once you've got the hang of threading the tablets individually:

<http://www.lindahendrickson.com/c-warp.htm>

Once the tablets have been threaded, make sure you have a suitable colour of thread wound onto your shuttle. The same colour as the thread on the outside tablets (the border) is usual. It doesn't matter if you don't have enough thread on the shuttle to finish the project, as you can join the weft thread quite easily and invisibly.

Weaving

Each line of weave is made by passing the thread wound around the shuttle (known as the "weft") through the gap between the threads known as the "shed". The shed is the gap formed between the threads going to the top holes on the tablets and the threads going to the bottom holes in the tablets, as shown below.



The tablets are then given a quarter turn either forwards or backwards. After giving the tablets a quarter turn, use the beater to beat the previously woven weft thread tightly into the weave and tighten the weft as desired by pulling on the shuttle end of it. The width of the band can be altered slightly by how tightly the weft is pulled across the band. You should have all the warp threads (the threads passing through the tablets) lying next to each other in the weave and the weft should mostly only be visible at the edges of the band.

When the tablets are turned forwards a quarter turn, the thread that started in hole A in the diagram will be the one that shows on the top of the weave on that line. If the tablets are turned backwards a quarter turn, the thread in hole D will be the one that shows on top of the weave in that line.

The coloured pattern is determined by the colour of the thread in each hole and by the direction in which the tablets are turned. Some texture can be achieved by using the direction of threading, which I haven't discussed here.

Twisting a tablet about its vertical axis then turning it forwards has the same effect as turning the tablet backwards, so many designs involve twisting some of the tablets around before turning the whole pack forwards again for the next line of weave.

For this particular band, rearrange the tablets before starting the weave in the following formation:

A												
B												
C												
D												
	\	/	\	/	\	/	\	/	\	/	\	/

Each row is labelled A to D to correspond with the position of the holes in the tablets at the start of the weave. This labelling is shown in the previous diagram. Each of the 12 columns represents one tablet in a pack of 12. The slashes underneath the columns represent the direction of threading, S or Z threading, described previously. \ represents a tablet that is S-threaded, / represents one that is Z-threaded. Tablets can be twisted about their vertical axis to change the direction of the threading and rotated to determine the colour of thread in the positions A to D. The colour of each box is the colour of thread that should be in that position on the tablet.

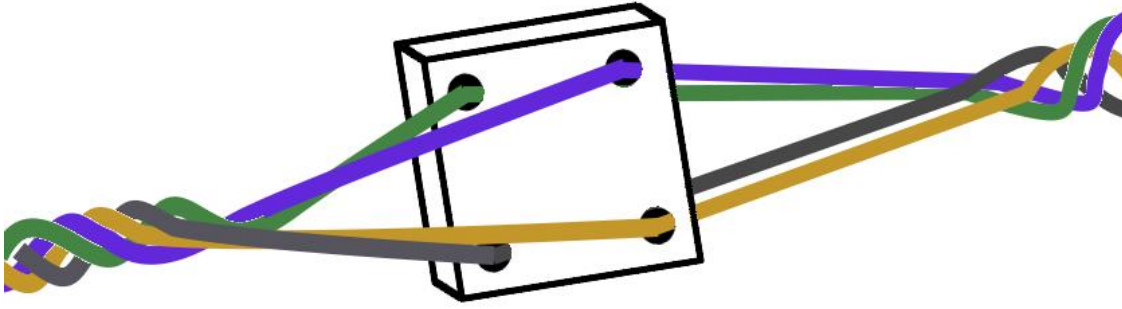
Once the tablets have been arranged for weaving, pass the shuttle through with the weft thread. Turn the tablets a quarter turn forwards, then beat the weft back to a suitable starting position before passing the shuttle through again and repeating the process. Having arranged the tablets, you will not want to lose the pattern again mid-weave, so keep a piece of string handy to tie the pack together in case you want to take a break from weaving before finishing the band.

The given arrangement will produce diagonal stripes if you keep weaving with forward turns. If you weave 10 rows turning the tablets forwards, then 10 rows turning them backwards and so on, alternating direction every 10 rows, then the diagonal stripes will keep changing direction every 10 rows. You can experiment and change the pattern by twisting some of the tablets around their vertical axis, but leaving others the same and see what happens to the weave.

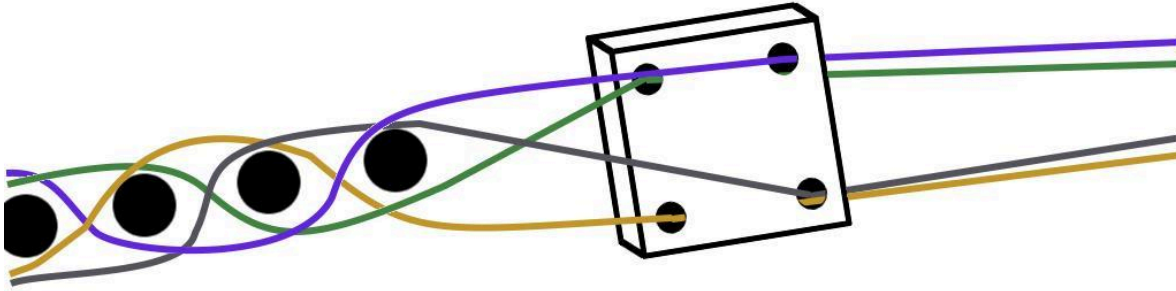
If your weft thread runs out, simply cut it off level with the edge of the weave and put the end of a new weft thread into the same shed, across the whole width of the weave. This means that at the join there will be two weft threads in the weave.

Once you have finished weaving, make sure you sew the loose end of weft back into the band. The warp threads will not unravel, and can be left as a tasselled edge, or tied into decorative knots or loops.

As a rough visualisation, as you rotate the cards, you are basically making a four-cord strand, twisted either one way or the other:



The weft is woven through the cords.



Further information

There's a neat little desktop software program that displays tablet weaving patterns, and a pattern library to use with it, at the loomy bin: <http://www.theloomybin.com/cw/index.html>

"The Techniques of Tablet Weaving" by Peter Collingwood – an extremely comprehensive book on the subject, though expensive.

Linda Hendrickson's site has a lot of interesting and useful information <http://www.lindahendrickson.com/>

Tablet Weavers' International Studies and Techniques (TWIST) is a tablet weaving organisation that produces articles and runs exhibitions and a discussion group. Registration form here <http://www.tabletweavers.org/join.htm>