

## Laurels' Challenge - Stretch That Comfort Zone!

### Trying Tablet Weaving

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I have to admit it, I have a problem. I have a loom. Or two. Or five.

Most are for narrow work, but I haven't used them. One is for inkle weaving, and I've been using that one. The others are rigid heddle and box looms, and one miniature version of a floor loom. In particular, I have a beautiful handmade box loom meant for either small rigid heddles (which I do not have) or tablets (which I do have).

The only problem is I'm terrified of messing up the projects on those looms. In particular, tablet weaving has just baffled me. Inkle weaving is a simple one-two pattern, but I can't seem to get the movement of the tablets. When I saw a challenge to try something that scares me, this was it!

I approach my weaving in a very practical manner. I like to figure out exactly how something works when I try it. This means it can take longer to learn, but I start being able to predict the issues and glitches in the pattern as or even before they happen. It also allows me to understand how to fix something when it does go wrong!

My first step was research, then experimentation. Once I was comfortable there, I moved on to a "draft" project in preparation for a final project. I am currently working on the final project, but it's looking good so far!

While I won't use the experimental piece for anything except my own progress, I was able to make bookmark lengths from the draft project, and I plan to use the final project on garb for my family and myself. I also like the simple pattern I chose, and will play with colors for it!

Narrow work comes from a variety of places. There is inkle weaving, Andean pebble weaving, and tablet weaving in several forms. Brocading and pick up techniques can be used with some of these to add even more variation. For this competition, I focussed on tablet weaving with four strands for each tablet. I've seen this done on anything from two C clamps on a table edge, to a box loom, to a standing floor inkle loom, to stretched between a stable point and a person's waist! While I plan to try a box loom experiment next, I decided to use my tabletop inkle loom because of my familiarity with it.

Experimentation

I took a class at Pennsic titled "Beginning Tablet Weaving" presented by Rufus of Stamford, OL. This was my second hands-on experience with tablet weaving, and I tangled it up completely. However, I



kept the notes and it gave me a starting place.

I used the basic threading and patterns from this to just mess around. I had some leftover thread from other projects, and warped the cards with four colors each. I started with a simple striped piece, and tried a variety of things. I switched how tablets faced, turned them forward and back, turned them at different times, etc. This was less about getting the right pattern, and more about seeing how the threads moved. I'm going to be learning new things each time, but this gave me a basic comfort level for troubleshooting.

### Draft project

I wanted to start with a relatively simple pattern with a definite repetition. I chose "Little chicken toes with bird's eyes", Pattern 2 from Applesies and Fox Noses Finnish Tabletweoven Bands by Maikki Karisto and Mervi Pasanen. I used colored markers to chart it out based on the thread I decided to use.

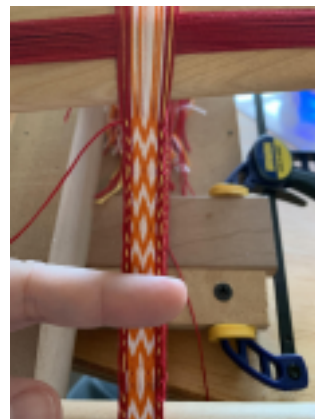
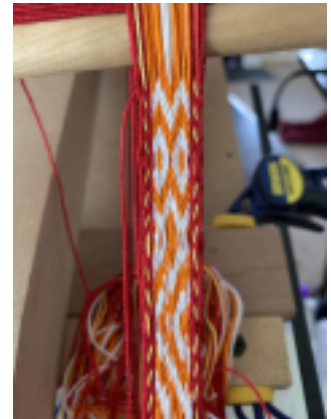
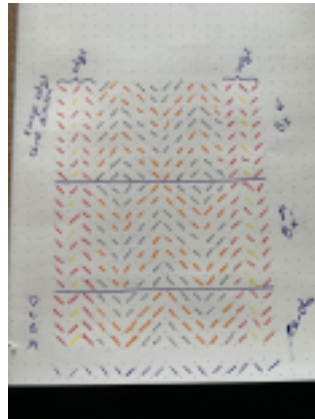
I used Aunt Lydia's Classic 10 crochet thread in Victory Red, Golden Yellow, Pumpkin, and White

As a "draft" piece, I didn't want to go use my nice thread, just in case I ruined it. This is a cotton thread that is thin, but workable enough to show me the pattern. I did end up getting more skeins to make threading the cards easier, but now I have a stash of colors to experiment with for more patterns!

It took some work in the beginning, and referring back to the book to figure out the adjustments, but I got this project working.

Eventually, I could see when to turn the tablets backwards without counting. I am also improving at predicting the colors in the next row based on the position of the tablets.

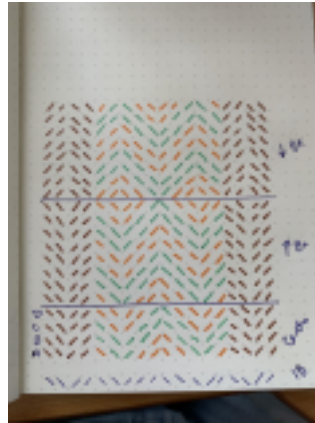
I sketched out the pattern both for this warp and for a couple other color combinations for the final project. I didn't like the way the borders from the book were turning out. It didn't matter how



I turned things, I either ended up with a lot of twist on the edges or not being able to make the pattern work. I adjusted my pattern for the final project, but I'll be doing more research to figure out how to handle these situations.

### Final project

For the final project, I used the same central pattern as the draft piece, but switched to solid borders. I switched to thread from White Wolf and the Phoenix called 2/8 Jaggerspun Mainline in Sable, Bottle Green, and Copper. This is a thin thread, thinner than the average yarn, but heavier than the crochet thread. This is also a wool thread, so it sticks together a lot more than the thread I usually use!



I had a bit of an issue with threading the cards. I had it all set up, but it wasn't moving quite right. It didn't take me long to fix it, and I was able to adjust things, but it took me a while to figure out what exactly happened. I was paying attention to which holes I was threading and that the card ended up in the correct orientation. The problem was I wasn't connecting the two and threading the cards with the intention of the correct orientation, I was just fixing it once I had it on the loom. I plan to pay more attention to threading the cards next time properly!



I have the project warped and started, and plan to weave the full length my inkle loom allows.

### What I Learned

This first thing I learned is that I can actually do this. As friends and family have told me before, I need to just do the thing rather than finding excuse after excuse. And I enjoyed it! I think I prefer my inkle weaving, but this is also interesting and a good exercise of my creativity.

I need to be more detail oriented on my projects. Little things that I wasn't paying as much attention to caused me problems, but I was thankfully able to troubleshoot them. I learned quite a bit about the basic mechanics of tabletweaving. I know I still have a long way to go, but at least I can now work out the simple patterns and go from there!

### Citations

Schweitzer, R. (2011) *Beginning Tablet Weaving*

Karisto, M. & Pasanen, M. (2013). *Applesies and Fox Noses Finnish Tablet woven Bands*.  
Salakirjat.