

Janet Dawson: Weaving for hares: what to do when your attention span is shorter than your warp!

I've always been a binge kind of person: I tend to do things intensely for a while and then not at all instead of doing a little bit all the time. I'm a hare rather than a tortoise, you might say, and frequently after a brisk and energetic start out of the gate I find myself lounging by the side of the track, taking a break and watching all the tortoises trundle slowly by.

As a weaver, this means I'm prone to putting on long warps and then realizing partway through that the prospect of weaving umpteen more yards is really daunting. Since there's no way I'm going to cut yards of perfectly good warp off the loom, I've come up with some tricks to avoid the problem and thereby keep my inner hare happy. If you are a binge-weaving hare like me, these suggestions might help you, too.

Avoid extra-long warps. If you're a hare, you'll run out of energy after that first mad sprint, so don't expect yourself to be a distance runner. A tortoise will tell you that it's more efficient to put on a long warp—it will produce less loom waste. This is true, but it also means you'll have to weave for the length of that long warp. If you put on enough warp for two dozen placemats but stall after the first six, what you've got is eighteen placemats worth of loom waste. Short warps can be finished quickly while the rush of enthusiasm is still upon you, so plan for six (or four!) placemats in the first place. If you want to weave more, you can always put on a second warp.

Learn to warp the loom quickly. Weaving is an ideal craft for hares, since so much of the effort involved in weaving happens up front while we're still gung ho about the project. Remember, you're not racing against the tortoises, you're racing against the moment when your inner hare is ready for a change. The farther you can get before that happens, the better. Also, if you can warp quickly, it'll be easier to convince yourself to put on more warps, more often.

Choose simple drafts that don't require much concentration to thread or to weave. If you're a product person rather than

a process person (almost a certainty for a hare), choose structures that are so simple you can weave them on autopilot. That way you can think about something else entirely, listen to books on tape, even chat with friends on the phone while you are threading or weaving. My friends are quite used to hearing the clack of the loom in the background of our calls.

A word of caution: avoid threading anything more complicated than a straight draw if you're going to be talking on the phone.

Choose projects with lots of potential for variation. Hares are much better at starting projects than finishing them, so if you do put on a warp for more than one item, make each unique in some fashion. Change the treadling. Use a different weft. Rethread with a different structure. Resley and turn those placemats into shawls—anything to mix it up. A corollary: Don't plan these variations in advance. A lot of

the excitement is wondering how the colors or structures will look. As long as there's some mystery ahead, curiosity will keep a hare on track. As a bonus, you won't waste all your initial energy on the planning stage. You can mull over choices for the next item while your autopilot is weaving.

The scarves pictured here are a perfect example of a project for hares. The warp was relatively short: enough for three scarves. At 120 warp threads, it only took about two hours to warp the loom. Its plain weave treadling made it possible for me to keep weaving while hanging out with my Mom, who was visiting at the time. (Fortunately Mom's a weaver, too, so watching me weave qualifies as "hanging out" in her book.) I changed the weft color for each scarf and even rethreaded to make a different stripe pattern.

As a result, when I got to the end of the three scarves I found myself wishing the warp were longer so that I could keep weaving—just how it ought to be at the end of a warp, whether you're a tortoise *or* a hare. 

