

Weaving a Treasure Purse

by FIONA DUTHIE

Treasure purses are a favorite weaving project in our house. They are just the right size to hold coins and the small trinkets and treasures that children love. There is something special—fundamental and resonating with times past—about making your own fabric. Woven treasure purses make wonderful gifts for friends, and the loom size can be changed to make pencil or eyeglass cases. These portable cardboard looms are versatile and easy to make using free, recycled materials. Weaving a treasure purse is a great project for learning the basics of weaving while making something both practical and beautiful.

Age range: 6+

Step 1: Making the loom:

- Cut a piece of cardboard 6" x 9" (15 cm x 23 cm).
- Draw a line across the loom 3/4" (1.5 cm) from the top and bottom.
- Cut in notches to the line, evenly spaced across the top and bottom of the loom. Cut 14-16 notches—be sure to make an even number of cuts.
- Leaving a tail about 6" (15 cm) long at the back, warp the loom. Come through the first notch to the front, wrap string around first notch at the bottom, come back to the top, and wrap string around the next notch. Continue until all notches are full. String will be at the top back of the loom. Cut string leaving a 6" tail and tie both tails at the back in a bow. {Photo 1}

Step 2: Weft yarns:

- Cut lengths of yarn for the weft. A length of about two arm spans is good—not so long that it will get knotted or tangled, and long enough to do a few rows without changing yarns frequently. {Photo 2}
- For younger children it is a good idea to pre-cut a selection of yarn and roll it into balls. You can select a range of colors that will complement one another. The lengths will be ready for the children, and they will begin to develop an eye for color harmonies. {Photo 3}

Step 3: Weaving:

This project uses simple tabby (plain) weave. This is the basic, over one, under one pattern. This pattern is easy for children to remember and produces a dense cloth for their purses to hold their treasures. Once children are familiar with this pattern, they can use this small project as a medium for experimentation.

Weaving can be done with fingers, or with a blunt yarn needle.

Weave in the tails as you go, so the edges are neat, and there will be less finishing at the end. Beat down the weaving often, to create a dense fabric and maintain some working space at the top. The more dense the fabric, the better it will hold small coins and treasures. If the warp threads cannot be seen, the fabric is dense enough. {Photo 4}

MATERIALS:

- stiff cardboard
- ruler, pencil, scissors
- cotton or hemp string (embroidery floss is good)
- assortment of bulky yarns (a great way to use ends from other projects)
- yarn needle
- button or bead



making the loom



measuring a weft length



a buffet of color-precut weft lengths



tabby weaving



5



6

Button Loop



7

sewing up the sides



8

sewing on the button

Step 4: Button Loop:

Weave across work in tabby weave. When pulling the yarn through, leave a loop in the middle space about the size of a quarter. {Photo 5}

Weave back to the loop, use the weft yarn to blanket stitch around the loop (or simply wrap the weft yarn around the loop), continue weaving on the other side and pull tight to hold the loop. Weave 3-4 more rows to finish.

{Photo 6}

Step 5: Finishing:

Gently remove the weaving from the loom. It may be necessary to bend the cardboard notches a little in order to remove the loops. Push the weaving up into both ends of the warp loops. Using fingers, manipulate fabric until it is evenly spaced.

Untie the top warp tails and sew in across the top. Clip any loose yarn ends. Fold up 3.5" (9cm) from the bottom, right sides out. Sew up the sides with strong thread or embroidery floss, using whip stitch. Be sure to catch the edge warp threads in each stitch. {Photo 7}

Fold over the top flap, position the button, and sew in place. {Photo 8}

