

weaving on the
Majacraft Circular Loom

GETTING STARTED

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Weaving in Circles with your new Majacraft Circular Loom

GETTING STARTED



Warping your loom

It might look a little bit like it, but we really didn't try to reinvent the wheel here! What we have is a very simple tool for weaving circular pieces, using any yarn you like, and to turn into anything you can imagine making, with lots of circular shapes! Hats, cushions, wall art, stitch the circles together to make shawls, afghans, add them onto your existing clothing as patches (think the back of your denim jacket, how cool is that!). There are myriad uses for a beautiful freeform circular weaving! And of course, we didn't just invent them, these have been around forever, and for inspiration you only need to look to the past activities of weavers to find things like 'Tenneriffe Lace', with patterns totally adaptable for this kind of weaving and loom, and then look to the amazing 1970s wallhanging art in brown and orange for retro colour inspirations.. As always, everything has been done before, but now it's 'our' turn to revitalise, renew, refresh, and add our own 21st century twist!

This tutorial will show you how to get started weaving on your new Circular loom, with the addition of a couple of technique variations you can use to create interest and texture in your weaving.

It's probably a good idea to make your first weaving with scrap yarns, as a practice weaving, before starting out with your 'precious' yarns.

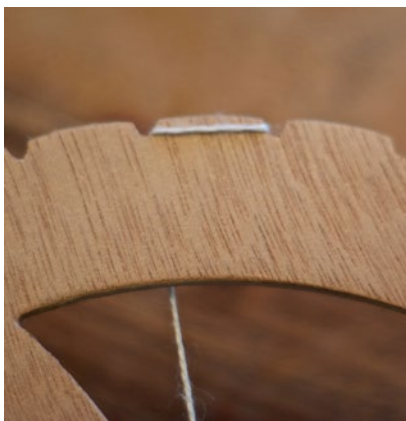
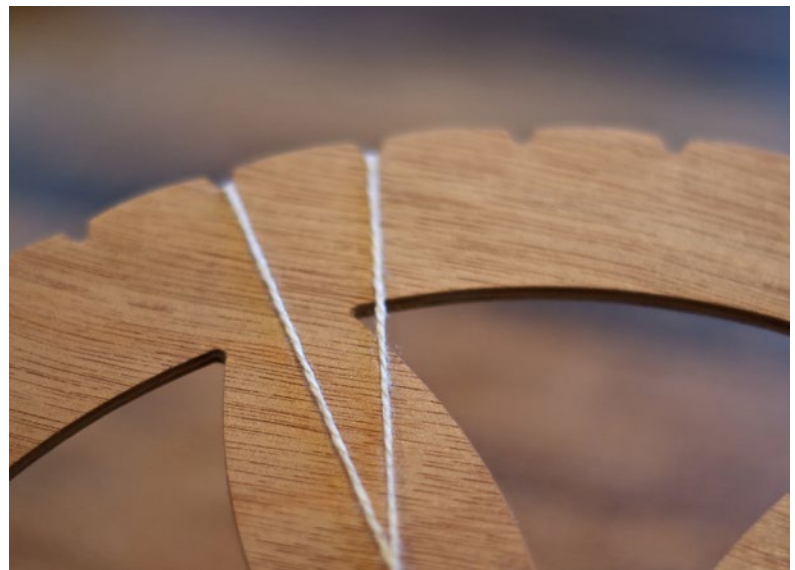


Your warp thread should be fairly thin, as it will build up in the middle where it crosses as you warp to opposite sides. It should also be good and strong! Start by attaching it to the back of the loom with a piece of tape, or you could just tie it on, making sure it goes through the centre hole, from front to back. Once the warp is in place this end can be secured to the weaving itself by simply knotting it around the centre.



The next step is to take the warp thread all the way through the hole to an outside notch and to the back of the loom.

Take the warp thread around the back of the loom in an anti clockwise direction and bring it back to the front of the loom through the next notch.



It should look like this (left) at the back. You can also take your yarn clockwise if that feels more comfortable for you, just remember to keep going around the loom in the same direction all the time.



Now bring your warp thread all the way across the circle to the notch on the opposite side, you will know it's directly opposite when the thread crosses the centre hole across the middle.

Again, bring your yarn to the back of the loom through the notch, take it anti-clockwise to the next notch and bring it back to the front again.



Now take your warp thread across the loom again, to the opposite notch, just like last time. You should now see a neat little cross in the middle of the centre hole in the loom.





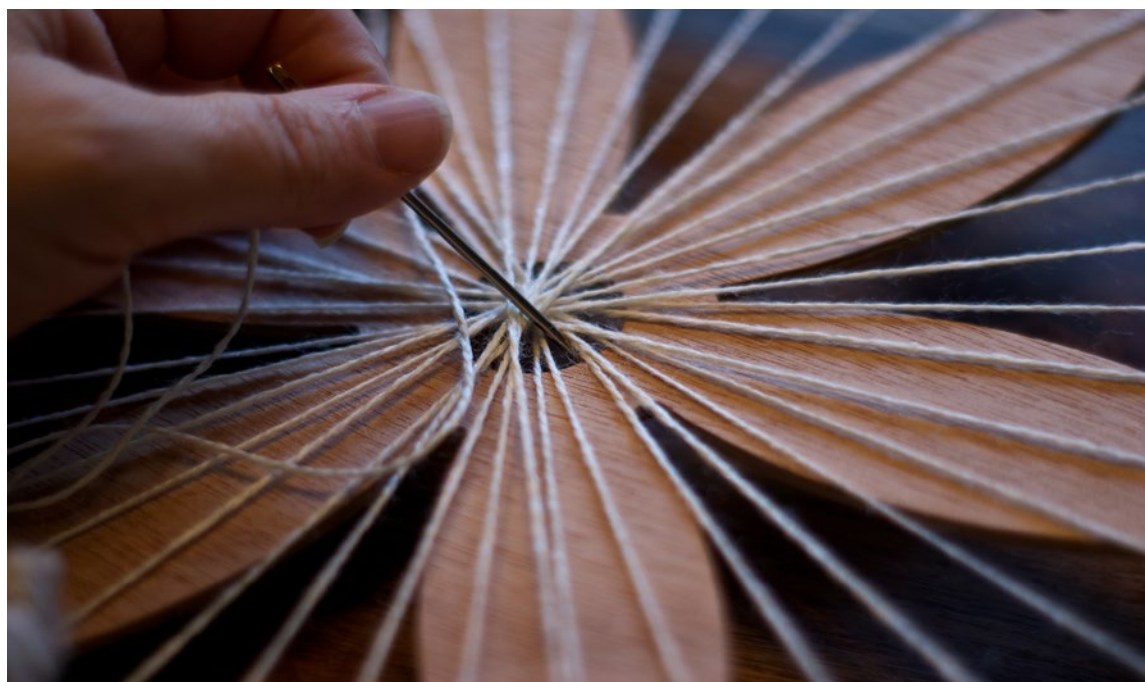
Keep working your way around the loom in the same direction, taking the yarn across the circle to the opposite side, through the notch, around the back to the next notch, back to the front, then across the loom again... keep repeating. The back of your loom should not have any crosses over the middle, allowing you to remove it when you have finished weaving, without needing to cut or tie the warp thread. It should look like this on the back:

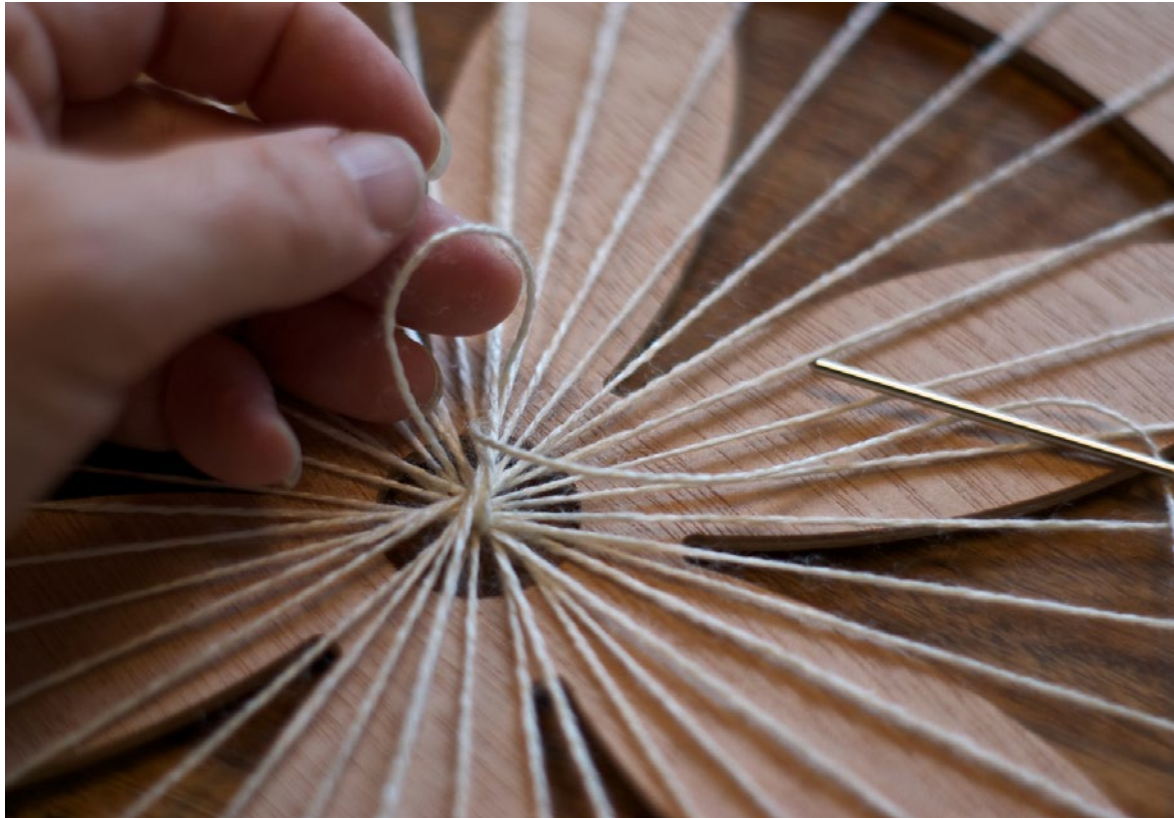


Keep working your way around the loom, always in the same direction. You may find that you have an uneven number of notches left. Since we are using fine warp thread you can just double up through one notch and take your yarn across to the last empty notch, back around to the front, doubling up with the first warp thread to take yarn through the hole in the middle and secure at the back.



At this stage I thread the last piece of warp through a large darning needle, and secure the end by threading it around the 'cross' in the middle of the loom. This not only secures the end of the warp but also draws that cross together, making it easier to weave.





Tie the end of the warp thread with a slip knot around the centre of the crossed threads. This should both secure the end of your warp yarn and also the centre of your weaving.

This is different if you have a thick yarn as warp, you will find that the centre becomes a large lump with each thread layered over the last. If you want to use thick yarns for your warp, I would suggest using an **alternative warping method** with a ring in the centre, either a metal one (keeping in mind that this centre ring will not be removable) or, if you want to use your piece for an item of clothing or something that you don't want a metal ring in the middle of, use a well knotted circle of yarn in the centre instead.

With this circle in the middle you can thread your warp through the centre ring and then straight back to the edge, the next notch around, rather than crossing in the middle and taking it to the other side. However with finer yarns the standard method of taking each fiber to opposite sides of the loom is probably the easiest way to get started!

Also using a finer yarn for your warp thread means that your weft yarns will be the more prominent, mostly hiding your finer warp. If you want your warp to take priority, however, try using a thicker yarn with a fine weft thread.

Start your Weaving



Now you can start weaving! The easiest way to get started here is to do some 'plain weave' simply taking your weft thread under and over the warp threads. It can be a bit tricky when you get started, you need to check carefully which thread is 'next', but once you get around the center a couple of times it will become easier to see.

The idea with plain weave is that on each 'row' you do the opposite of the previous one, so where you last went under the warp thread, on the next row you then go over it, if you went over the warp thread on the previous round, on the next one you go under it.



Sometimes you will find that your 'rows' might get out of sync, or if you have an even number of weft threads you will need to do this on every round, where you are going under a warp thread that you also went under on the last row. If this happens, and remember, this is freeform (!) you can skip a thread and go under two, on the next row you will have to go over two at the same place. Overall, with this kind of weaving, its good to keep in mind that we are not following a pattern, or any specific rules, sometimes its just fun to let it all go and see what will happen! Your best effects may well come from these areas where things did not go 'to plan'.

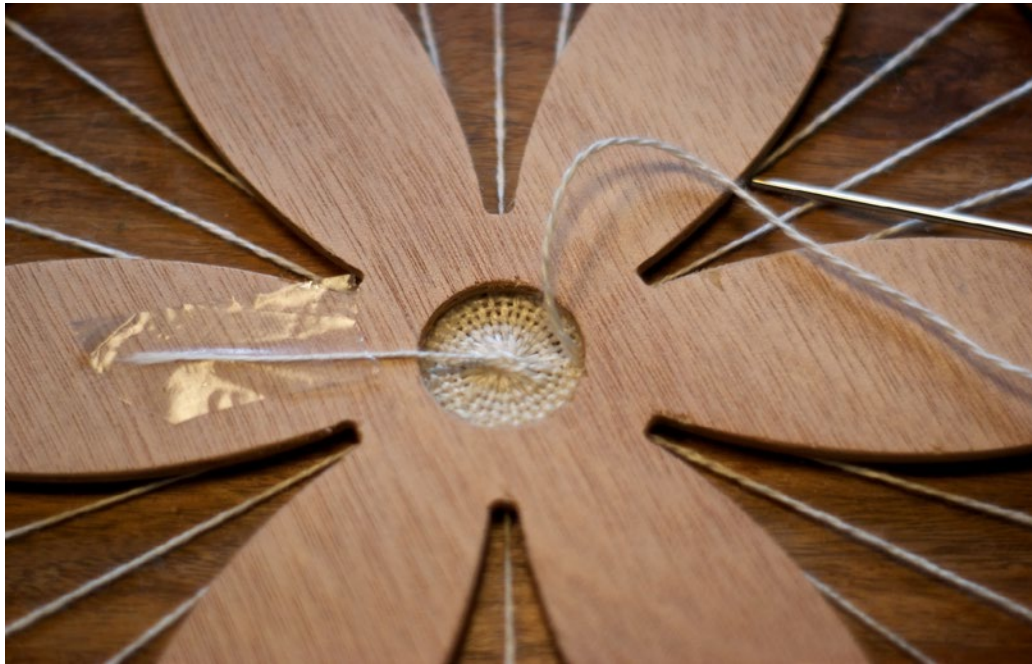


There are some other things you can do however, to return to your plain weave pattern.

I sometimes take each warp thread at a time, placing a slip knot around it. Take the needle under the warp, and back up, going through the loop you just made in the weft yarn, so as you tighten it, it becomes a knot around the warp thread.



By the time you have been all the way around your circle, tying this knot around each single warp thread, you will have a nice raised row, that has the effect of creating a texture feature, and also secures your weft onto the warp in that row, from there you can even leave a gap between this row and the next, securing the next row in the same way, to create a kind of lace effect with exposed warp threads.



When you get to the end of your weft thread, you can take it to the back of your loom and leave it there till you have finished your weaving. Once you have the weaving off the loom you can weave those ends back through the reverse side, securing them and keeping them out of sight. If you are making an item that may get a lot of wear and use, I would suggest making a small knot to be really sure they will not pull out.



Starting a new colour is simply a matter of continuing to weave in the same way as you have been, around the circle, under and over, or you could do a row of 'knots' as previously shown. The loose end can be threaded through to sit at the back of the weaving for securing later when the weaving is off the loom.

Different colours can also emphasise the textures and the way you weave, in the picture to the right I have done a few rows of plain weave with this hand painted yarn, and when it turned to black again I started a new row of knots to make an 'edge'.



You can keep adding different yarns, and it can be fun to increase the thickness of them as you work your way towards the edges of the loom and into the wider spaced warp.

It can be a bit tricky to thread your thicker yarns through the warp, but you don't need to use the entire skein at once! What I do is make a 'butterfly' of the yarn by wrapping a figure of eight between my thumb and little finger, then secure it with a loop around the middle. This 'butterfly' is much easier to thread between the warp threads and the loom.





To make a section in your weaving, rather than continuing to go around and around the circle in the same direction, it is possible to make 'wedges' and separate pieces around your circle.



First weave under and over as usual, when you are the point where you want to end your section, take the yarn back around the last warp thread, and weave back under and over in the opposite direction, being sure to go under where you had previously gone over in the last row.



If you want to add some more interest you can do what is known as a 'clasped weft'. To do this you weave two different warp threads in opposite directions to the point where you wish them to meet. At that point bring them both to the front of the weaving and cross them over each other.



Twist the two yarns around each other so they 'clasp' each other with a twist.

Then weave them back in the opposite directions, back the way they came. Because you have added the twist where the two yarns meet, there will be no gap in your weaving where the colour/yarn change is.



It is possible to make multiple sections around your circle, with gaps between them to add interest and keep them separate, to do this simply turn your yarn at the end of the 'row' you create. When you add a new section, you can roughly measure out the amount of yarn you will need by laying it out on the loom first, this saves cutting off any more of your precious yarn than you need to!



It is a good idea to always finish the last few rows of your weaving by taking your weft all the way around the circle again in plain weave, to be sure your weaving will hold together properly.



You will find that as you add and end yarns there will be loose threads hanging at the back of your weaving. You can either weave these into the back of your weaving as you go, or you can do that after you remove it. As far as securing the ends go, I always make some kind of knot before I weave the ends in, just to be really sure they won't come loose, especially if this is to be a decorative piece, because I might choose not to wash and

'full' it after it is off the loom. This finishing is intended to set the fibers, very slightly felting (fulling) the fabric to properly finish it, this does help secure the ends into the fabric. But if you don't plan on doing that, just make sure you are confident in the way you secure the ends at the back of the weaving.



As you get closer to the edge you may find it a bit more difficult to thread your yarn through the warp.

Enlist the aid of a nice big crochet hook if you need it!





When you get near to your edge, make sure you press your weaving flat and stretch the edges out a bit, if the outside rows are too tight when you take this off the loom, it will pucker and go dome shaped. This is fine if you want to make that shape! But if you want to be sure it will sit flat, check that your outside rows are reasonably loose before you take it off and weave as close to the edge as you can.



Additions



If you want to add some extras to your circle, it can be easier to do some of those before you take it off the loom. You can add some tassels easily, take a length of yarn, fold it in half then thread the loop end under a warp thread. Make a loop then thread the ends of the tassel yarn through the loop and pull up into a knot.

You can also build and extend the size and shape of your woven circle, by picking up stitches and crocheting around it. You can continue the circle or totally freeform it into any shape you like! This is a technique that is easier to do after you have removed the weaving from the loom.

There will be a second tutorial covering decorative weaving techniques that can be done on this circle loom, as well as more information on adding to the size and shape of your basic circle weave.





To remove your weaving from the loom, place it flat and gently lift the warp threads from the back of the loom, working your way around it.

If you want to use this as a wall hanging, you will need to either mount it onto a solid backing (like a heavy card) or you can do what I do and thread a piece of 2mm florists wire around it to hold it in its circle shape when it is on the wall.





Run the wire through the warp threads at the back of the weaving.



Join it with a couple of twists so that it stays in place, keeping the circle open. This should be strong enough to hold your weaving flat once it is hung on the wall.

Since the florists wire is quite soft, you can shape and reshape it. You might prefer to have a more sturdy wire or hoop. You can use a wire hoop, even though you can't 'thread' it through the weaving, you can simply stitch it onto the back of your piece, the stitches will hold it in place and keep the weaving stretched.

You can use the same technique even if you have added onto the edges of the weaving, although if you have made crazy shapes you will need to be a bit more creative on how you reinforce it, and that's where the bendable florists wire comes in handy!

Alternatively, you can turn your weaving into something else, a hat (keep crocheting!) a cushion cover, or, stitch them together and give them a nice cloth backing to make a unique afghan, or crochet them together into a shawl. You can even add these to larger weavings, or stitch them onto other things, like the back of a denim jacket, or onto a bag, there are many possibilities if you let your imagination soar!

Happy Weaving!

