



American Tapestry Alliance Educational Articles

[This glossary is not meant to be all-inclusive, or the ultimate authority on definitions. It was developed from a few submitted glossaries and includes primarily words that refer directly to tapestry weaving.

However, the glossary is meant to be useful. So with that objective, we would like to experiment with a “Wikipedia” style glossary. You can:

- add a word and its definition.
- add to, or modify the definition of one of the words already in the glossary.
- submit a digital image to illustrate one of the terms.

Submit your additions to: Mary Lane: marylane53@mac.com Thanks for helping out!]

Glossary of Tapestry Terms

Abrash – Slight variations in the weft color due to different dye lots, or to differences in dye absorption in the same dye lot.

Arrondissement – (French) Soumak.

Aubusson – (French) A city in France in which many commercial, low warp ateliers are located. The word is often used to refer, in a generic way, to low warp weaving.

Awl – A pointed, metal instrument used for piercing small holes in leather, wood, etc. Weavers use awls to loosen, or pick apart, the densely packed weft and to manipulate the surface of the woven fabric.

Basse-licier – (French) Low warp tapestry weaver.

Basse lisse – (French) A low warp loom; low warp weaving.

Bâton de croisure – (French) Shed stick.

Battage – (French) A woven technique used for shading and transparencies in which the number of full passes of two or more colors changes in a proportional manner.

Beams – Rollers on a loom, the warp beam holds the extra warp and the cloth beam holds the finished cloth.

Beat – To force down the weft, usually with a beater, or the point of a bobbin.

Beater – Heavy tool with teeth used to compress the weft into the bed of cloth, usually applied with some force, also known as a comb.

Block – A finishing procedure used to flatten and square a completed tapestry. The tapestry is fixed onto a surface and gently steamed.

Bobbin – Tool on which the weft is wound in an orderly fashion and which is passed between the sheds of the warp. A pointed bobbin is traditionally used in high-warp weaving. A bobbin with two blunt ends is traditionally used in low warp weaving.



Wool weft yarn, high warp bobbins and beater
Photo credit: Mary Lane

Broche – (French) Bobbin (high warp) with one pointed end.

Butterfly – A small hank of weft yarn wound around the little finger and thumb, and tied with a knot.

Calque – (French) Tracing.

Cartoon – Full-sized sketch that guides the weaver during weaving. Cartoons are quite variable, from simple outlines to fully painted.

Carton – (French) Cartoon.

Chaîne – (French) Warp.

Chapelet – (French) Rosary.

Chiné – (French) Color blending that results from winding different colors on the same bobbin.

Closed shed – The set of threads that are raised by the heddles, or leashes.

Comb – Tool used for forcing down the weft; also known as a beater.

Crapaud – (French) Weft that skips over several warps on the front of the tapestry; the literal translation is “toad.”

Croisement (des fils) – (French) Cross.

Cross – Where the warp threads cross each other during warping.

Demi-duite – (French) A half pass, or pick, of weft; a variety of techniques using different colors in alternating sheds; sometimes called pick and pick.

Dent – Open space in the reed through which the warp threads pass.

Descent – Correctly woven weft that is not perpendicular to the warp, usually running from a high point in the weaving to a lower point.

Discontinuous weft – Weaving in which the weft does not pass from selvedge to selvedge, but only within the area of the cloth in which that color is needed.

Double weft interlock – An interlock technique in which wefts from adjoining shapes wrap around each other in both sheds.

Dovetail – An interlocking method in which wefts from two adjoining shapes alternately turn around the warp where two colors meet.

Duite – (French) A full pass of weft.

Eccentric weaving – Weaving in which the weft travels at a diagonal angle, rather than perpendicular to the warp.

End – A single warp thread.

Ensouples – (French) Warp beams.

L'entre-toise – (French) Heddle bar separator for warping.

Epi – Ends per inch (warp).

Fil – (French) Thread.

Fil plein – (French) Full thread, also known as a hill, or a high thread.

Fil creux – (French) Hollow thread, also known as a valley, or a low thread.

Fils de croisure (French) – High warp term for the set of threads whose shed is made by a shed stick.

Fils de lice (French) – High warp term for the set of threads whose shed is made by pulling the heddles.

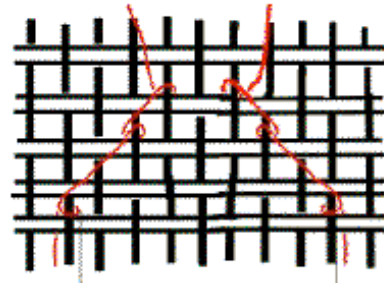
Finishing – The process of blocking and securing warp ends after the tapestry has been cut off the loom.

Float – Weft thread that misses one or more warps and floats on the surface.

Flute – (French) Low warp bobbin.

Full warp – Warp thread that is covered by the preceding half-pass. Also called a hill, or high. A full warp is next to a hollow warp, also known as a valley, or low warp.

Flying Shuttle – A supplementary weft thread or threads that describes a line/lines in any direction, which lies on the surface of the tapestry but is, at the same time, integrated with the main weave as the tapestry is woven.



Flying Shuttle Illustration: Dorothy Clews

Gobelin – (French) Officially, 'Manufacture Nationale des Gobelins', established in 1662. A French, state supported manufactory for, among other things, tapestry weaving. The name, Gobelin, was the name of a family of dyers who originally inhabited the location of the manufactory. The term is used to refer, in a generic way, to high warp weaving.

Half pass – A weft pass that covers half the warps (half of a complete pass). Also called a pick or a shot.

Heddle – A loop of cotton twine or wire with a center loop through which the warp end is passed. also known as a leash.

Hatching – A blending technique, similar to hachures, but less systematic, in which weft passes of two different colors alternate.

Hachure – Triangular shapes used for shading and half tones, produced by weaving proportionately increasing and decreasing numbers of picks of two tones.

Haute lisse – (French) A high warp loom; high warp weaving.

High warp loom – A loom that stretches the warp vertically (perpendicular to the floor).



High warp loom with string heddles
From Diderot's Encyclopedia 1751-1772

Hill – See full thread.

Hollow warp – Warp thread that is not filled in, or covered by the preceding half-pass. Also called a valley or a low thread.

Interlocks – Various methods for preventing slits where two colors meet, including wrapping wefts around each other or alternating wefts from adjoining shapes around a single warp.

Kesi – Chinese silk tapestry woven in a pictorial design.

Kilim (Kelim) – A weft-faced flat woven rug in tapestry weave, often from Turkey or Afghanistan.

K'ossu – A Chinese form of very finely woven tapestry weaving often used for robes.

Lazy lines – A tradition in Kilims and Navajo rugs in which a large area of a single color is broken into smaller areas for weaving. Very faint diagonal lines can be seen at the joins between the separately woven shapes.

Leash – A loop of cotton twine through which the warp end is passed. Also known as a heddle.

Lice Rod – The rod to which the lices are attached.

Lice shed – The shed, which is made by pulling the far warps (which run through the lices) toward the weaver.

Lices – (French) The string heddles attached to alternate warp threads.

Low warp – A loom, which stretches the warp horizontally (parallel to the floor).

Open Shed – The shed that is made by the shed rod and that remains open.

Ourdir – (French) To warp.

L'ourdissoir – (French) Warping board.

Pass – A weft that passes through both sheds (open and closed) and therefore fills, or covers, all warps (both hollow and full). Two picks, or half passes.

Peigne – (French) Comb, reed, or tapestry beater.

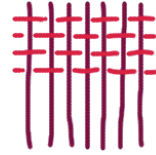
Perche à lisse – (French) Heddle bar.

Pienne – (French) A group of warp threads equal to 10 cm, or 4 inches of width.

Pick – A half pass where the weft travels through just one shed.

Pick and pick – Two colors of weft woven in alternating sheds, producing vertical stripes.

Plain weave – Weave structure in which the weft passes over, then under consecutive warps.



Plain weave

Poinçon – (French) Awl.

Portée – (French) A unit in a French system of defining warp density. A portée is 12 warp ends and the density of the warp is defined, in turn, by the number of portée in a 40 cm section.

Ppi – Picks per inch.

Reed – A steel, comb-like implement used to space the warp and beat down the weft.

Rölkakan – Swedish or Norwegian interlock.

Rosary – A collection of weft thread color samples that correspond to the cartoon.

Scaffold weaving – A warping method in which the warp for the tapestry is connected to a secondary warp that attaches to the two beams of the loom. This warping technique is used to create four-selvedge weaving. The secondary warp allows the weaver to maintain a shed opening to the top of the warp.

Selvedge – Outside edge where the weft turns around the last warp.

Sett – Number of warp threads per inch or centimeter.

Shed – The opening in the warp through which the weft passes.

Shed rod, shed stick – The rod that separates alternating warps to form one of the two sheds, the open shed.

Shuttle – A tool for carrying and passing the weft through the shed.

Single weft interlock – An interlock technique in which wefts from adjoining shapes wrap around each other in one shed.

Slit – Opening created when two separately woven areas of weft meet along adjacent warps and do not interlock.

Soumak – Weft wrapping that goes over two warps and back under one (or over four and under two). The technique creates a raised surface that can be made to appear on the front, or the back of the weaving. Often used by tapestry weavers for outlining.

Stitch – The portion of a weft that covers one warp.

Support rod – The rod to which the lice rod is attached.

Sword – Flat stick used to separate warp threads and press down weft.

Tabby – Plain weave.

Tapestry weaving – A weft faced, woven cloth with discontinuous wefts, usually plain weave.

Tapis – (French) Rug.

Tapiserie –(French) Tapestry.

Tasser – (French) To beat.

Teinter – (French) To dye.

Tenture – (French) Wall hanging.

Tissage – (French) Weaving.

Tisserand – (French) Fabric weaver.

Tissue – (French) Fabric.

Trame – (French) Weft.

Treadles – Foot pedals that raise groups of warp threads to make a shed.

Tuyage – (French) Ribbing.

Twining – Two or more wefts which encircle the warps, and twist around each other between warps. Useful for outlining.

Valley – See hollow thread.

Vautoire – (French) Raddle.

Verdure – (French) A tapestry whose imagery is predominantly foliage or forest scenes.

Warp – The threads stretched between warp beam and cloth beam, collectively, or each thread individually.

Warping – Preparing the warp and arranging it on the loom.

Wedge weave – A form of tapestry weaving in which the weft yarns are woven diagonally across the warp yarns, pulling the warp yarns askew and creating scalloped edges and distinctive zigzag designs.

Weft – The thread that passes horizontally (usually) between the warp threads, thus forming a cloth.

Weft-faced – Fabric in which only the weft threads are visible.



Weaving in progress, showing how the horizontal, colored weft completely covers the vertical white warp in a weft-faced weave.
Photo credit: Mary Lane