

Build Your Own Loom

A Navajo style loom is a simple and elegant piece of weaving equipment. Please don't feel like you need to construct a work of art. Navajo looms are built to produce textile; they are not furniture. Navajos weave on anything that has square corners and is sturdy. Scrap lumber is often the only available source of wood. You will actually be driving nails into the loom frame to make your warp. In addition to the design resented here, you can find loom plans in *Navajo Weaving Way (Bighorse/Bennett), chapter 4 and Navajo and Hopi Weaving Techniques (Pendleton), page 16*. If you build the loom according to the plans in *Navajo Weaving Way*, it will be too big to sit on a table, but it will accommodate larger pieces of weaving.

The loom below is the one that Jennie Slick has built for her classes. It is best if these plans are kept away from people who build a lot of things out of wood because they almost always want to "improve" the design through some feat of over-engineering. The results of this can range from interesting to hilarious, but can also result in looms which will not work (a wrought iron loom with a winch as a tensioning device comes to mind), so be cautious in your use of outside help. On the other hand, a few power tools are nice.

If you have questions, please contact Mary Walker and she'll be glad to help you out. (mary.walker@weavinginbeauty.com)

To build your loom you will need:

- 2 - 1x4s 24 inches long (upper and lower crosspieces)
- 2 - 1x4s 36 inches long (upright sides)
- 2 - 1x4s 18 inches long (supports)
- 12 - wood screws 1½" long for the loom frame (you can substitute nails, but screws are sturdier)
- 8 - wood screws 1½" long or 8 - 2" long bolts with wing nuts to attach the supports
- 4 - wood screws 1" long to attach the pipe straps (you can use the 1½" screws if you have some extras)
- 4 - small angle brackets with screws to attach them (these will be small screws)
- 4 - 1" pipe straps
- 2 - pieces of ½ inch (interior measure) of conduit, cut to 24 inches long

Building the loom:

1. Visit Lowe's or Home Depot and gather your wood, screws, the conduit, and maybe a power screw driver. Getting this stuff is really fun, because the hardware store people always want to know what the heck you're building. While you're out, get some Neosporin and Band-aids, just in case.
2. Start with one of the 24" boards and the two 36" boards.
3. **Frame Assembly: READ BEFORE YOU PUT THE FRAME TOGETHER.** Attach the two 36" 1x4's to one of the 24" 1x4's using three screws on each end of the 24" 1x4. Make sure that you place the 24" piece on top of the frame as shown at left. If you do not do this, your loom will be too wide for 24" pipes or dowels. See the picture at left for proper board placement.
4. Measure the inside of the frame and cut the other 24" board to fit inside. Attach the 1x4 to the two 36" 1x4's about 4" from the end of the 36" boards. This board should be placed far enough from the end of the boards to be just above the supports when they are attached. See the picture at left for placement of the shorter board.
5. Attach the supports on each side using either four wood screws or four bolts with wing nuts. See the picture below for fastener placement. You'll see that Henry Lee Dedman, who built these looms, cut a small angled piece from the supports, but you don't need to.
6. Attach the pipe straps. Once again, refer to the picture for placement. The pipe straps are the small metal loops at the top and bottom of the loom.
7. Attach the angle brackets to the four inside corners of the loom.
8. You're done!

Navajo Style Loom Designed by Henry Lee Dedman, Ft. Defiance, Arizona

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To weave, you will also need:

2 - 1" dowels 24 inches long

or

2 - additional ½" conduit 24" long

2 - ⅛" dowels 24 inches long

1 - ball of cotton twine (size 18 or so)

1 - ball of nylon twine

1 - roll of 18 or 20 gauge galvanized wire

1 - hammer

12 -3-4" nails (NOT aluminum; they bend)

1 - Scissors

2 - 7" turnbuckles (a little smaller or larger will work fine)