

## 2.10.4 – Fiber Arts Tool

### Viking Era Loom



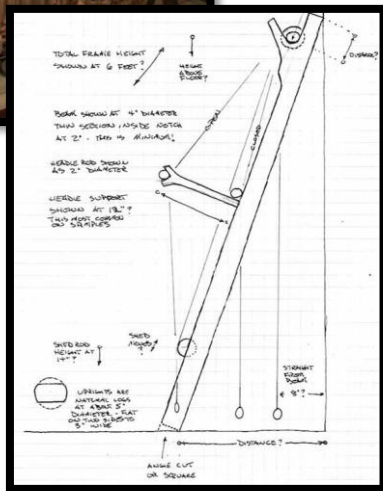
*Figure 1 - Viking Loom*

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## Viking Weaving Loom

**Introduction:** The invention of the weaving loom was a strong turning point in the creation of textiles. “Even before the actual process of weaving was discovered, the basic principle of weaving was applied to interlace branches and twigs to create fences, shelters and baskets for protection.”<sup>1</sup> Among several of the items in the various grave finds were items that were used in the women’s everyday life, including, looms, and other weaving tools. “To keep the women occupied there were four looms and a variety of implements for spinning and weaving.”<sup>2</sup>



**Background:** From the numerous grave finds in Scandinavia, specifically the finding of loom a variety of loom weights, it can be speculated that the most prevalent loom was the warp-weighted loom. The warp-weighted loom was important to everyday life during the Viking age. It was the way in which people, primarily the women of the house, would make the cloth necessary for the

family. The cloth would be used to make clothing, bedding, table coverings and wall hangings. “Women living in rural areas in the Viking Age spent most of their time in the triangle of byre, dairy and living quarters, providing their family with food and clothing.”<sup>3</sup>

**Design:** After talking with people who have made their own version of the loom as well as researching what others have chosen to do, I sat down and followed the

same basic design with a few modifications. Figure 2<sup>4</sup> is from the Reykjavik National Museum and figure 3<sup>5</sup> is a basic plan from Warehamforge. I used these images as well as looms that I saw at various events to create my own.

**Materials:** I used two – 2x4’s for the main supports. I used a 1x1 for the leg supports. I used 2x4’s cut at 12” for the heddle support. I used three – 1 ½” dowels for the cross beams, 1 ¼” dowels for the shed stick and 1” dowel for the heddles. I used modern

corner pieces for the breast beam support. I also used ½” dowels for stoppers as well as to insert the heddle supports.

**Technique:** In this period, the wood workers used hand tools to cut the materials for the loom as well as to help assemble the loom. For convenience and time, I chose to use modern tools and precut wood pieces to assist me in making this loom. I first had to measure decide on the length of the overall loom. “Measure twice, cut once” is the motto to live by when using power tools.

**Final construction:**

The warp weighted loom has two uprights that would be lean up against the wall of the home. “The loom rests against a wall, so that the uprights are at a natural angle to the freely-hanging warp.”<sup>6</sup> For my loom I used 2x4’s for the main



supports, while I used 1x1 for the leg supports. I decided to create my loom with leg supports because I wanted to be able to set up the loom anywhere.

The cloth beam is the upper most crossbar that holds the warp threads. “On this loom, the warp threads (those which run lengthways through the cloth) are hung from a moveable ‘cloth beam’, set across two uprights.”<sup>7</sup>

The shed rod is the lower cross beam in which the warp hangs on either side, depending on the separation of the warp. Near the bottom of the loom is a fixed crossbar, called the “shed rod”. It opens a “shed” or space between the



warp threads, with alternate warp threads either passing over the shed rod in line with the uprights, or hanging freely behind.<sup>8</sup>

The heddle rod is the bar that crosses the loom and is held by the brackets.

The weights from this era were found to be between 8oz – 1lb, but in the later Viking period a number are found weighing about 1lb 12oz – 2lbs.<sup>9</sup> The weights I made for this project are roughly between 2lbs and 2.5lbs.

**Conclusion:** When looking at the loom it appears to be quite simple, however having to go out and cut a down a tree with hand tools would have required knowledge and patience. As I worked on this project, I realized that it takes time to make the loom. It took time to learn how to use the tools to cut and drill the wood. I had very little patience and was excited to start working on the loom that I often felt like I was rushing. If I were to make this again, I think that I would spend more time designing certain pieces to be more authentic. In period, the loom would be easily movable and mine is as well. I made it using limited modern joints, trying to maintain the simplicity and functionality of the piece.

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## End Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Rozentals, Janis. "Weaving History – Weavedesign." Weavedesign, Janis Rozentals, 30 Oct. 2012. Web. 05 July 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Jesch, Judith. *Women in the Viking Age*, pg. 33

<sup>3</sup> Jesch, Judith. *Women in the Viking Age*, pg. 41

<sup>4</sup> Oppstadvey Warp-weighted Loom Reykjavik National Museum

<sup>5</sup> "An ICELANDIC LOOM for the Norse Encampment -Daily Life in the Viking Age circa 1000 AD at Vinland. The Viking Encampment Living History Program at Parks Canada L'Anse Aux Meadows NHSC in Newfoundland." *An ICELANDIC LOOM for the Norse Encampment -Daily Life in the Viking Age circa 1000 AD at Vinland. The Viking Encampment Living History Program at Parks Canada L'Anse Aux Meadows NHSC in Newfoundland*. Darrell Markewitz, 2010. Web. 05 July 2016

<sup>6</sup> Ewing, Thor. "Viking Clothing", pg. 137

<sup>7</sup> Ewing, Thor. "Viking Clothing", pg. 137

<sup>8</sup> Ewing, Thor. "Viking Clothing", pg. 137

<sup>9</sup> Ewing, Thor. "Viking Clothing", pg. 137