



Erindale Tapestry Studio

Laura Berlage

11113N Fullington Road Hayward, WI 54843 (715) 462-3453
laura@erindaletapestrystudio.com www.erindaletapestrystudio.com

Rutevev Sheepskin Pillow Tapestry Kit (Skill Level 2)



This project was inspired by traditional Norwegian designs and is a perfect pairing of full-fleece pelts and yarn from our sheep!

Welcome to this colorful and unique tapestry weaving kit! These instructions are designed to help guide you through the process, so you can make your own beautiful creation. Finished dimensions of the tapestry are 12.5 by 12.5 inches, not including selvedge.

If it's helpful, please reference the relevant tutorial videos from Introduction to Tapestry Weaving (Level 2) as a refresher for techniques and methods. The most useful videos for this project include:

- Warping with Selvedge
- Making a Butterfly
- Interlock
- Stepped Mesa
- Star Motif (especially parts 2, 3, and 4)
- Finishing with Selvedge

The kit includes colorful wool weft from our sheep, a graph chart of the design, full-fleece pelt from our sheep (already cut to size), 2 glover's needles, and faux sinew for stitching. The yarns included are Aran weight, which is slightly thicker than the DK weight we used in class. Enjoy weaving with this yarn and notice how it packs differently from the DK style. You will also notice that it creates a sturdier finished textile, so you can enjoy your pillow for years and years.

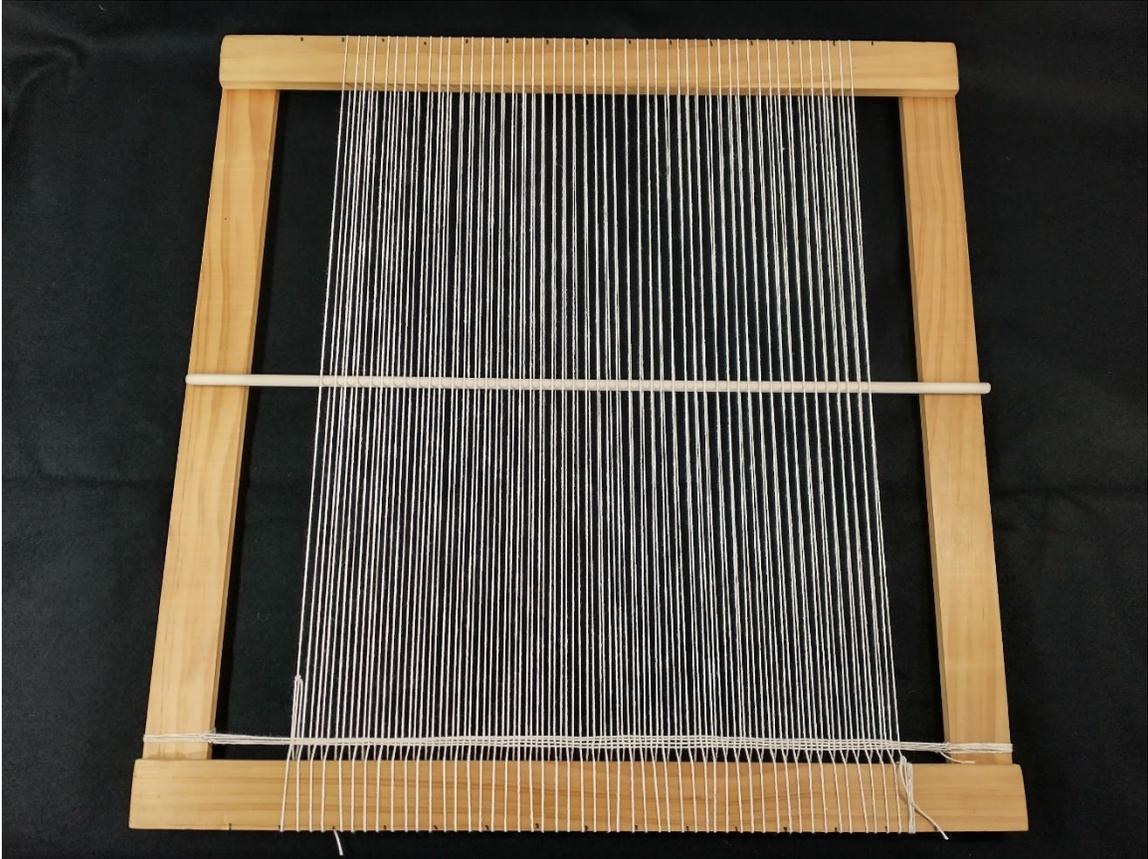
Warp thread is not included in this kit. Recommended warp thread for Level 2 graduates is Maysville cotton carpet warp (8/4). If you prefer the #10 cotton crochet thread, this will work as well but is not as sturdy.

You will need to supply a 12-inch pillow for inside the piece. The pillow will be fully assembled when stitched, so you will want it handy before finishing. You will also want 8 safety pins and a thimble (if you like using one for leatherwork).

It is important that our finished piece match up well with the size of the pelt, as the tapestry will be the front of the pillow cover and the pelt the back side. That is why I've focused on number of turns for each pattern change to create the desired height. This was worked out mathematically with my own pack rate. If you notice that your pack rate is not compressing as mine did, you may have to adjust the number of turns per pattern change. Remember to check and measure pattern sections below the one you're currently working on, as the top layers will compress as you continue to weave. To start, I strongly recommend the matrix I created for reading the grid and achieving the right height for this piece.

This means that we'll read the pattern graph as each square having the value of 4 warps wide (2 in each shed) and 9 turns high.

Our objective with this piece is to weave a tapestry that is square, so this project is an invitation to continue to practice weaving straight sides.



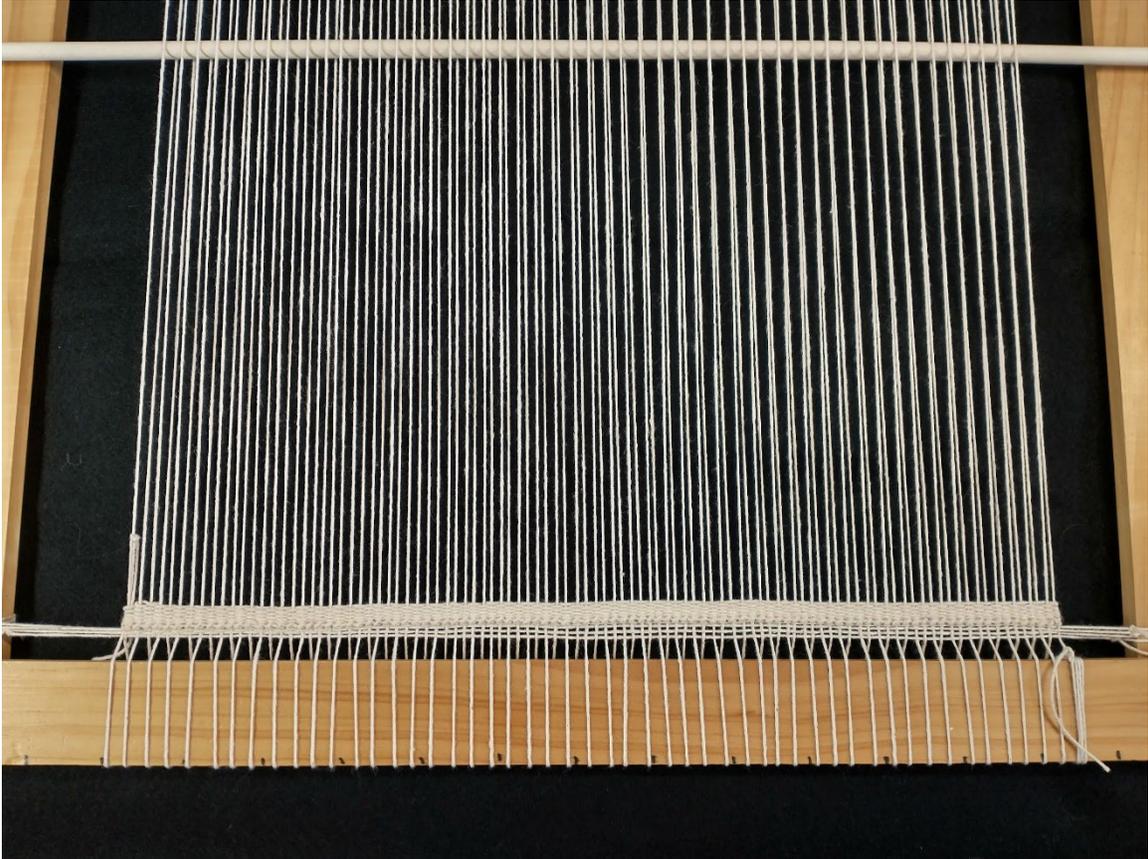
First, warp your frame loom at 8 epi (warps per inch), which means 4 loops within each inch mark for 12.5 inches. This means that you should have 50 warp loops at the top of your frame. Having the right number of warps is critical for the design to count correctly.

Start warping in the 2nd inch section as marked on the loom from the left, warping 12 and a half inches in the figure 8 pattern, starting at the lower left. For the last $\frac{1}{2}$ inch, wrap 2 wraps at the top of the “13th” inch, then tie off at the bottom (it will look like 3 wraps in that $\frac{1}{2}$ inch at the bottom). There should be 50 warp loops at the top of the loom. Adjust the tension and warp spacing as shown in the warping tutorial. Remember not to warp too tight.

Add the 4 rows of spacers at the bottom of the loom, using additional warp. Remember to keep this step tight. Double check that the left most warp is a stick shed warp, and the right most warp is a pull shed warp. Adjust warp spacing for evenness.

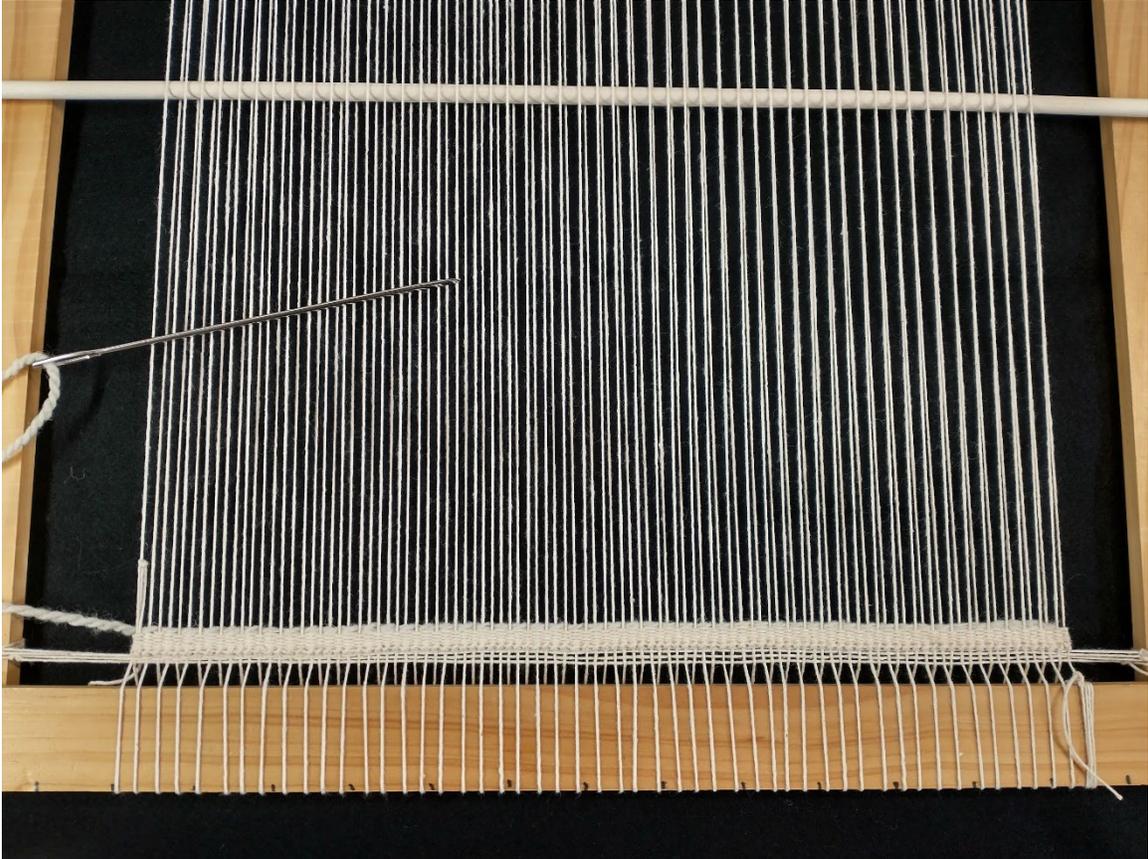


Using additional warp, work the stacked half hitch knots that start the selvedge header. Pay attention to maintaining proper warp spacing. Start at the left side of the piece and work all the way to the right. Lay in the tail at the left above the knots in pull shed to bury it.



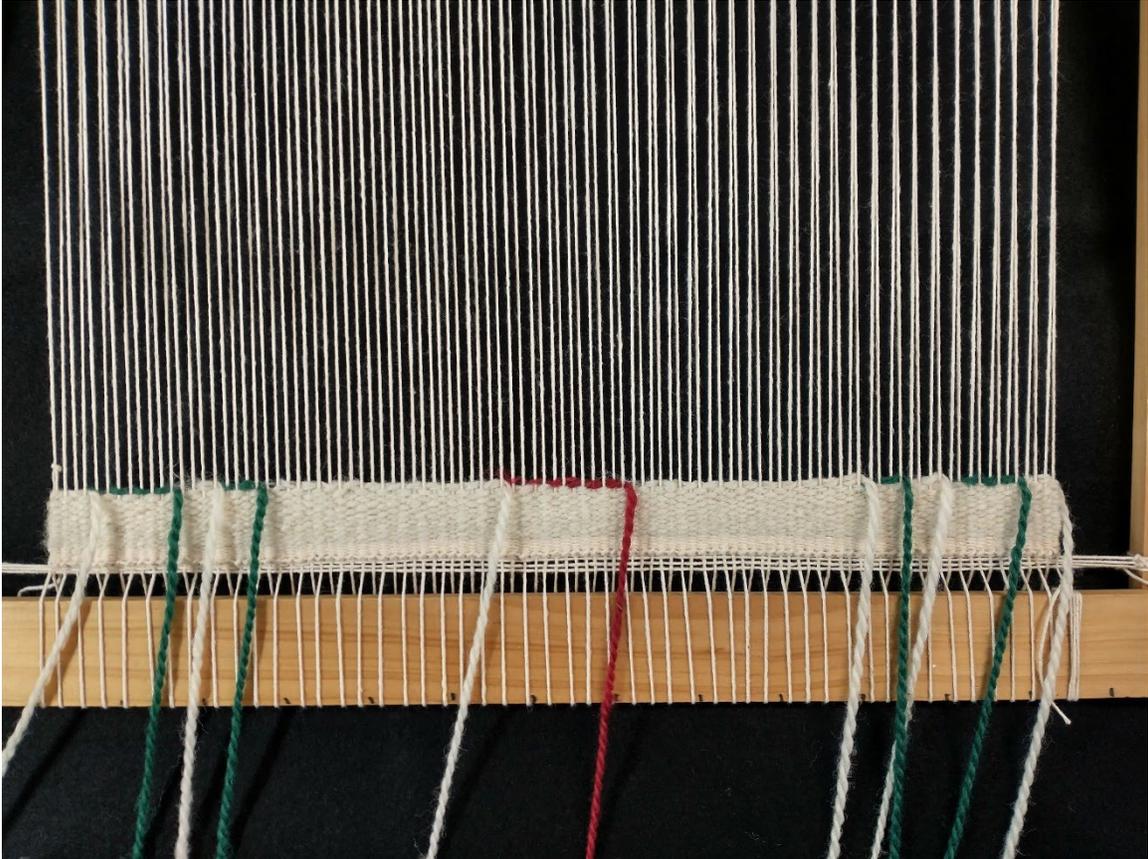
Continuing with the warp thread, weave straight rows to form the “warp as weft” part of the selvedge. We will be folding this part of the selvedge back before attaching it to the pelt, so we won’t see it. On mine, I worked 5 turns of warp as weft.

Now you are ready to weave the design!



Working in stick shed from right to left, lay in the first row of white, drawing in just enough to bring the tail within the warp, so there's no tail to bury later. Come back in pull shed. Pay attention to your weft's "wiggle dance." Continue these straight rows for 9 turns, stopping when you are about to make the 9th pull shed.

Because these rows are going all the way across, I find it easier to use tatting needles. As I begin bringing in smaller sections of color, I'll work these as butterflies. Use the weft carrying method that is most comfortable for you.



Keeping your white at the left, and prepare 5 more butterflies of white, 4 butterflies of green, and 1 butterfly of red. Cueing off the pattern graph, count your wefts in pull shed to make certain that the red is being laid in at the very center of the piece. (I can say from previous experience that it NEVER hurts to double-check your counting when starting a symmetric design). At this point, your pull shed warps should count: white 2, green 4, white 2, green 2, white 12, red 6, white 12, green 2, white 2, green 4, white 2.

Once you have completed this laying in row, you are ready to come back in stick shed, starting with the right-most white and interlocking your way across all the way to the left.



Continue working back and forth, interlocking only in stick shed. This means that each row will start on the right-hand side of the tapestry, just like it did with the stepped mesa motif in the Level 2 course.

Continue with the same warp counts for each color until you have completed the stick shed row that would create the 9th turn (loop) on the left-hand side of the color shape once it heads back in pull shed. That means your weft strand is on the left with 8 stacked turns (loops) below it.

Because this yarn is thicker than the yarn used in our Level 2 project, we will only be making 9 turns instead of 12 per pattern change.



Now it's time to create the next pattern change in pull shed. In this pattern change, some colors continue as before, some are changing position, and some are being added in. It was much easier to see what was happening after the first stick shed row of the new pattern, so that's where this picture was taken.

The pull shed warps now read (from right to left): white 2, green 4, white 2, green 2, white 2, green 2, white 6, red 10, white 6, green 2, white 2, green 2, white 2, green 4, white 2.



In the next pattern change, the first golden cross begins. This divides the red in half, which means that we now need a second red butterfly.

At the corners of the piece, the green squares are ending. This means that a green and a white need to be feathered off and their tails buried. For the left side, keep the left white. For the right side, keep the right white. Notice that the longer green shape is widening. On the left side, the white stops short to accommodate this, while on the right side, the green can advance over the new warps.



Continue with 9 turns per pattern section, cueing in with the pattern graph. Here, the white stars are appearing in the middle, while the red is expanding out on either side. The green pine sprigs have finished, which are looking nice.



You'll notice that most symmetric tapestry designs become their most complicated as you near the center of the design. Now I have lots of beautiful butterflies to keep from tangling! But they're so pretty, it's more than worth it.

Pro Tip: when making a pattern change with these small green squares, if the square is moving to the right (as seen on the left side), the butterfly can carry across to the new warps. But if the square is moving to the left (as seen on the right side), the weft must be feathered off and the butterfly laid in anew.



With the completion of the central star, we're more than halfway! Now you can cue in not only with the design graph but also what you've woven so far when creating the mirror image. Sometimes, it can be easy to miss when elements return, such as the beginning of the green pine sprigs as shown here.

Pro Tip: if it ever feels like your eyes are going buggy reading which row you are on the design, use a piece of scratch paper laid on top so that you are just looking at the row you are reading. This can help prevent accidentally reading from more than one row when making a pattern change.



This piece is about as large of a project as we would want to weave on our little frame looms. That means the warp can feel rather tight as you reach the top. To save my fingers, I transitioned butterflies to needles for longer stretches of pattern color as I neared the top of the piece.

For smaller sections of color (like the greens), you may find it easier to work them as loose strands (not in a butterfly) to avoid having a whole flurry of needles to manage.



Work the final pattern change in white on top. Remember, the last time we wove all the way across with one color was at the very beginning of the piece! Because we are so near the top of our loom, it can be easy to work this too tightly and have draw-in. Pay attention to your wiggle dance, so your piece continues to stay straight, right to the end.



Congratulations, your beautiful tapestry is woven! Now it's time to create the top selvedge header.

First, weave the warp as weft, creating a selvedge with the same number of rows as you did at the bottom. Then, starting on the left-hand side, work the stacked half hitch knots to complete the selvedge.



After completing your knots, weave in the tail just below the knots, as shown, and trim. Pack down the selvedge firmly with your comb. You are now ready to trim your tapestry free from the loom.

If the tapestry does not want to lay flat when removed from the loom, this is a good time to steam treat the piece as necessary. Because everything has been interlocked, there are no slits to stitch on this piece.



Just as a safety measure because this piece will see so much use and love, I tied the warp ends off in pairs with overhand knots, then trimmed the warp. The last thing I want to do is snag mine on something silly and pull a warp out of place. This step, however, is optional.

Working on the back side of the piece, fold the selvedge and just a little bit of the white over. Fabric clips or clothes pins can be helpful. Use a needle and thread to hem stitch the edge over to help hold it in place. I'm using doubled white sewing thread. Take care to pull stitches gently but not so tightly that they distort the front surface of the textile.



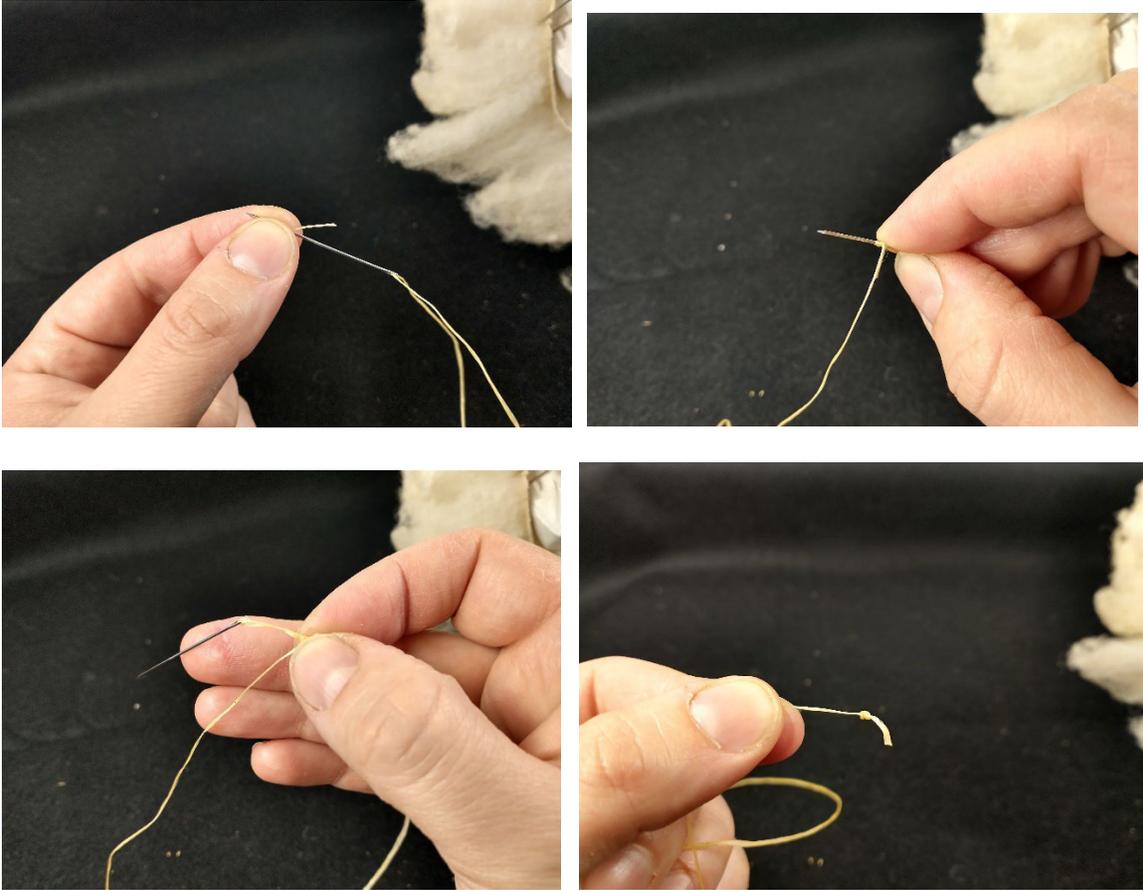
For fun, you can check how squarely your piece was woven. While a tapestry should not be kept folded for long (it leaves creases that weaken the textile), we can try some gentle folding which has been used historically to check the symmetry of geometric tapestries. One is to fold the piece in quarters (left), and the other on the diagonal (right). Notice where the image elements lie, especially the gold square in the middle.

If yours is not quite square, fear not. This all grows easier with practice. You may have to finesse your seaming with the pelt to get it to fit, but the process is forgiving for minor adjustments.



Assemble your pillow elements—pelt, filler pillow, and tapestry on top. The pelt should be wool-side-down, and the tapestry should be right-side-up. We will be stitching these layers together in place. We will NOT be inverting the pillow after stitching, which is why the pretty sides should already be facing outwards.

To help stabilize this pillow lasagna, use safety pins at the corners and the middle of each side. This will use 8 safety pins. Use caution as you poke through the leather of the pelt, so you don't poke your finger as well. I found that, when stitching, it's easy to take up too much leather compared to the amount of tapestry, so the safety pins gave me a reference point for keeping track of progress. As you sew, then remove the safety pins when they become too close for working comfortably.



A glover's needle is very sharp, but it's just what we need for sewing through the leather. I also like to use a leather thimble on the middle finger for driving the needle through the leather.

The faux sinew has been supplied pre-stripped down to size. Thread one of the strips onto your needle. Tying a sturdy knot for leatherwork may be a bit different from what you are accustomed to doing for fabric stitching. Hold the tail of the thread on your needle, then wrap around it several times. Slip the knot off the back of the needle, then draw the knot all the way back down to the end of the tail.

This may take some practice at first but having that sturdy knot will be important for the longevity of your piece.



The stitching instructions will be for a right-handed person. If you are left-handed, reverse or adjust as necessary.

Start by stitching through the pelt, from the leather side to the wool side. The knot will then lodge against the leather and be inside the pillow. When stitching on a sheepskin pelt, it's important to always work the needle from the leather side out through the wool side, otherwise wool will be drug back towards the inside.



Repeat this stitching step again to lock the first stitch and knot in place.

When stitching on leather, always keep stitches about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in from the edge, to protect them against ripping out.



Coming up from that anchoring stitch, then catch some of the outer turns of the tapestry. The glover's needle is very sharp and can cut your warp, so I took care to try to snag just the wool weft and leave the warp alone.



I want my stitches to be as invisible as possible, so catching these outer or edge wefts allows the stitches to come towards the back of the piece, leaving the front very lovely and undisturbed.

Pull snugly between stitches to draw the pelt and tapestry layers together.



I quickly found it more comfortable for me to stitch with the tapestry facing me and the felt facing away.



Here you can see progress, continuing the process of catching the very edge of the tapestry, then stitching through the felt from leather side to wool side.

You want to keep your stitches at a moderate size (about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch), so the pillow looks nice and even but the stitches in the leather are far enough apart to protect against them tearing out like ripping a perforated

line later. Notice how, where I've stitched, you cannot see the inner pillow anymore.



To help keep the stitches tight, it's helpful to bind off after a few as you go (don't cut the thread, just knot and continue as shown).



When binding off, stitch through the leather (top), pull tight, then stitch through the leather again and come back through your loop (left). This will help create an anchor and prevent previous stitches from trying to loosen as you stitch.

When starting a new strand, bind off twice and bury the old thread. Knot a new thread, then back up several stitches before starting, so there is a

slight overlap of stitches from one strand to the next. Remove safety pins as you go.



When coming up to a corner, fully stitch the one side and bind off to secure that end (don't cut the thread).



Then, stitch into the corner of the new side of the leather first, drawing it over to the new side of the tapestry. Work a second stitch back through the corner of the leather to fully secure, then carry on with the new side.

You'll notice that small notches were cut out of the pelt at the corners. This is to make stitching around the corners of the pillow easier and less bulky, as well as give some flexibility in case your

tapestry turned out a slightly different size than mine.



A finished seam should look smooth with the wool visible but not the leather. At the final corner, add a few extra stitches to overlap with your first stitches, bind off twice, and bury the end in the tapestry.



The back of your pillow should look like a cuddly, mini square sheep!



Congratulations, you've finished your rutevov sheepskin pillow! Cuddle time! I hope you have enjoyed making this project, and I hope that you will also enjoy using it or gifting it to a loved one. Tapestry is a very durable textile, and this pillow should give you years and years of service. Happy weaving!