SUPPLIES

sturdy cardboard box, such as a pizza box—the wider the box the wider your piece of cloth will be (a shoebox may be too weak to support the string)

scissors

ruler

pencil

sturdy cotton or linen string

tape

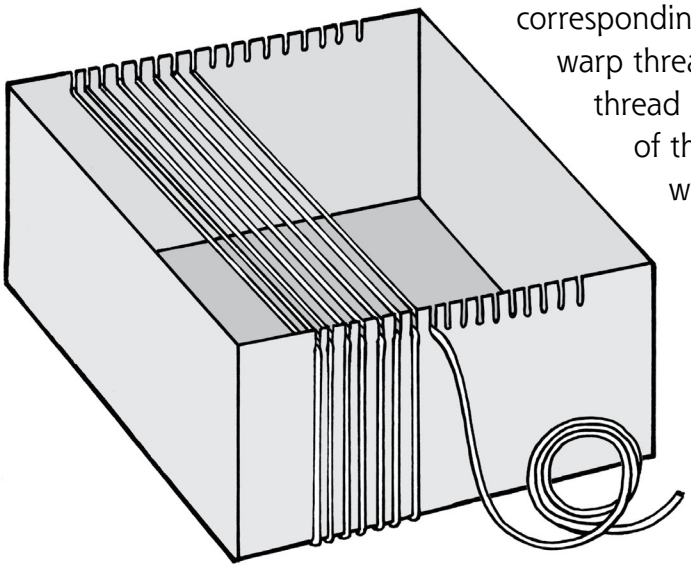
yarn of various colors

Make Your Own
LOOM AND CLOTH

This activity gives you a sense of how much work it was for Maya women to weave clothing by hand for an entire family.

1 Cut the top (or flaps) off of a cardboard box. Using your ruler and a pencil, mark every ¼ inch on two opposite sides of the cardboard box (about every ½ centimeter). Make sure that the marks on one side line up with the marks on the other side. Then make 1-inch cuts on each of the marks (2½ centimeters).

2 Next you need to string your warp, or the lengthwise strings of the weaving. Secure the end of your string to the bottom or side of your cardboard box (your loom) with a piece of tape. Slide the string into the first cut on one side and gently pull it across the loom and into the corresponding cut on the other side. Wrap the warp thread around the bottom, pulling the thread into the next cut on the other side of the box edge. Continue to wrap the warp around the box until all cuts are full. Tighten any loose threads to an even tension, and then secure the other end of the warp string on the bottom or side with a piece of tape.



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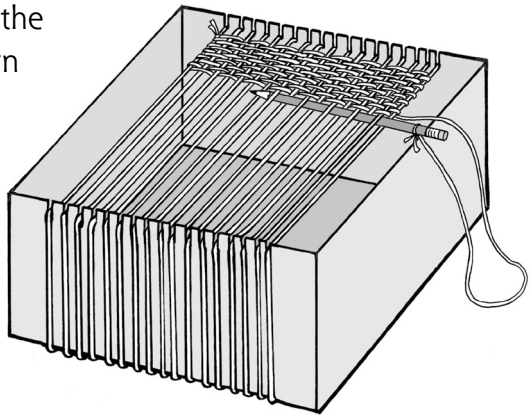
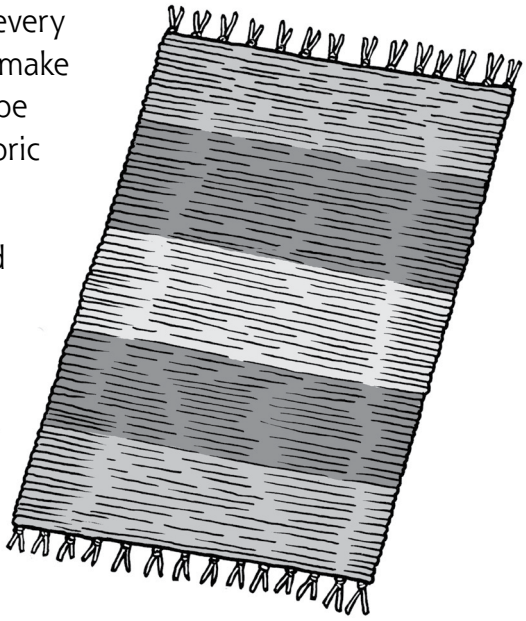
3 Now your loom is ready for weaving! Choose the yarn you want to start with and tie one end to the first warp string. Wrap the other end of the yarn around your pencil. Put a piece of tape around the pencil to secure the yarn.



4 Push the pencil under the first warp string and over the next all the way across until you have woven all the strings. Begin the second row by weaving back toward the direction you just came from. Note that you must weave the second row the opposite way from the first row, going over the warp strings that you just went under, and under the warp strings you just went over.

5 To change the color or texture of the yarn as you are weaving, tie one end of the new yarn to the end of the old yarn, and the other end of the new yarn to the end of the pencil. Make sure the knot is pushed to the back of the weaving. After every couple of rows, pull all the yarn gently to make sure that the fabric is tight and even. Just be careful not to pull it too tightly or your fabric will not have straight edges.



6 When you have woven your fabric and completely filled up the loom, you can finish off your cloth by tying the yarn to the very last warp string. Then cut all warp threads from your cardboard loom and tie pairs of strings on each side together in a tight knot to finish off your cloth.