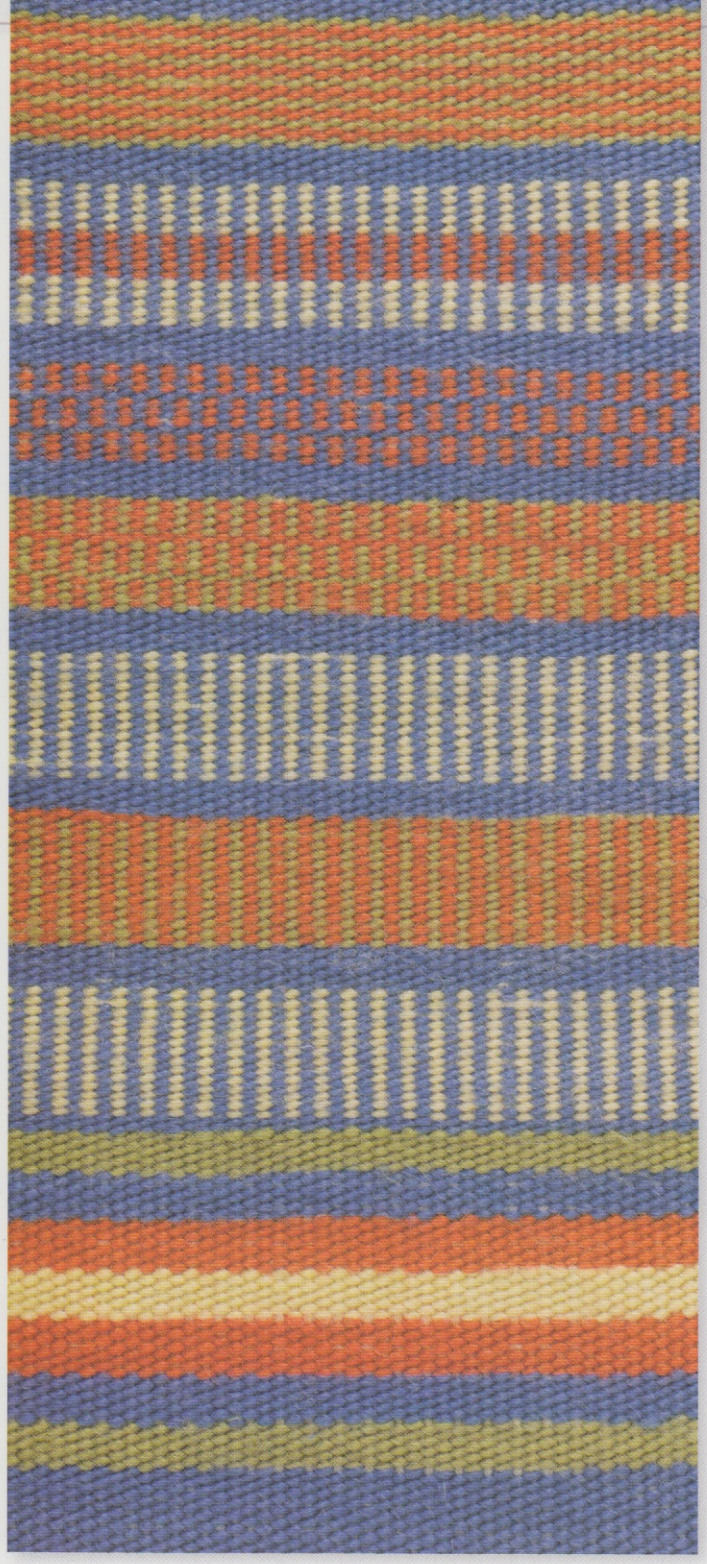


Generally, weft- or warp-faced fabrics are thicker, denser, and slower to weave. With weft-faced fabrics, you have the advantage of changing the wefts as you weave, whereas with warp-faced fabrics, the colors are set in the warping process. Weft-faced fabrics are ideal for household textiles and any time a pile fabric is called for; warp-faced fabrics are advantageous for bands or narrow fabrics where strength is required. As in the case of plain weave, even the simplest structure of over, under, over, under can have many different looks from a balanced plain weave, to a thick weft-faced one, to a densely woven warp-faced one.

Weft-Faced Fabrics

To create a weft-faced fabric, you need to spread the warp far enough apart so that when you beat in the weft it will pack in densely enough to obscure the warp completely. Generally, you will choose a warp yarn that is smoother and stronger and of a smaller size than the weft yarn. Most likely, your weft will be of a larger size than the warp, as well as softer and squishier so it will pack in well and cover the warp.

Design-wise, the warp, because it is hidden by the weft, is not a factor in the finished design. I particularly like weft-faced fabrics because the pattern is developed solely from the colors used in the weft. Generally, a weft-faced fabric is denser and heavier than a balanced weave and will not have the same drape. You would not choose this structure, for example, for a shawl, but you might choose it to weave a warm vest.

When I think of designing for a weft-faced fabric, I look to color patterning for the action. Because the warp is hidden, other than holding the fabric together structurally, it doesn't enter into the design. If you have ever examined ethnic rugs, you'll see just how very far weft-faced patterns can go. You can weave different color sequences selvedge to selvedge, create pictures by using tapestry techniques where many wefts travel across the weaving to make a design, or create a fuzzy pile surface, to name a few of the possibilities. Some of the techniques explored here, specifically ghiordes knots, picked-up loops, and soumak, could also be included in finger-controlled techniques (Chapter 2). I've included them in this chapter because their primary use is as a weft-faced technique.

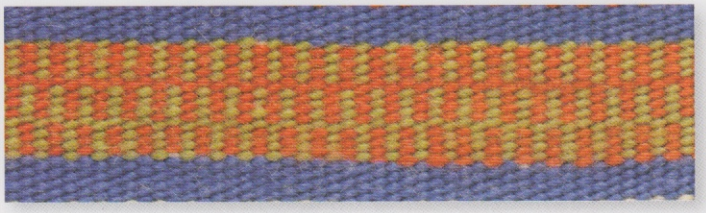
Even though you can weave rug techniques on a rigid heddle loom, I am of the opinion that you cannot weave a dense, sturdy rug on a rigid heddle loom. A rug of any size demands much of a loom—a lot of tension to create a dense and strong fabric and a heavy beater to beat the weft into place. Do not be discouraged, however, because there are wonderful weft-faced fabrics that can be created on a rigid heddle loom.

Weft-Faced Plain-Weave Sampler

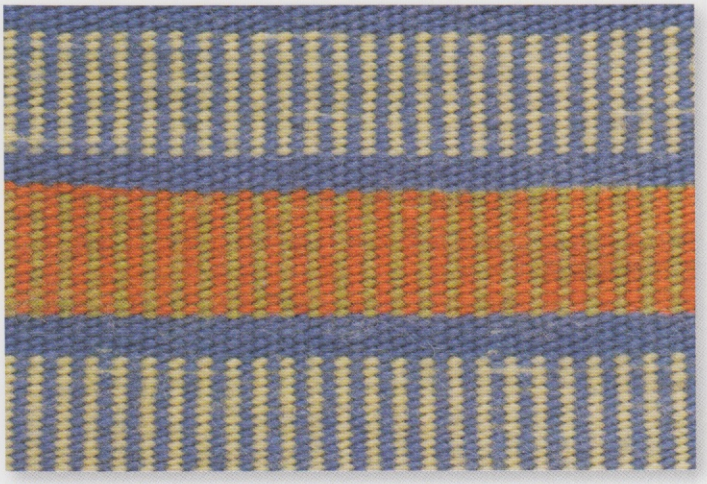
Woven by Angela Johnson.

Wool rug warp (Navaho Warp from Davidson) forms the base of this weft-faced sampler. I used a worsted-weight wool/mohair singles for the weft (Lamb's Pride from Brown Sheep in Tiger Lily, Winter Blue, Pistachio, and Aran). The warp sett is 10 epi; the weft is packed in at about 18 ppi.

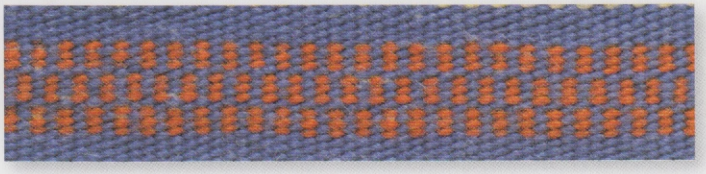
When multiple rows of a color are repeated, horizontal stripes result. Here, 8 rows of each color are woven.



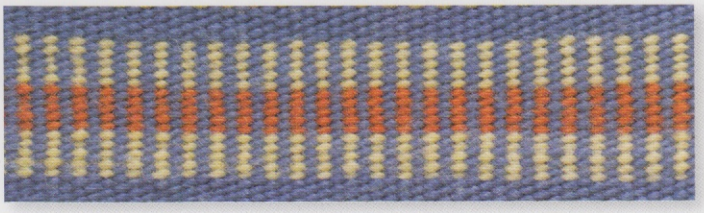
A checkerboard effect is created when the colors swap places. Four repeats of alternating picks of green and orange are followed by 4 repeats of alternating picks of orange and green, followed by 4 repeats of alternating green and orange, and so on.



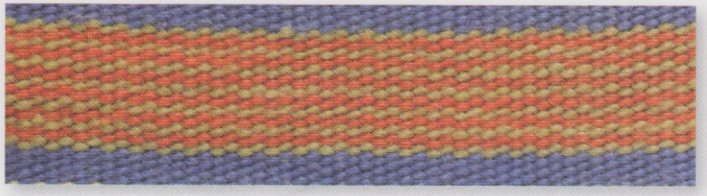
Vertical stripes are created when two colors are alternated, called "pick-and-pick." One pick each of white and blue are alternated, then green and orange, then blue and white. Each band of pick-and-pick stripes is separated by 8 rows of solid blue.



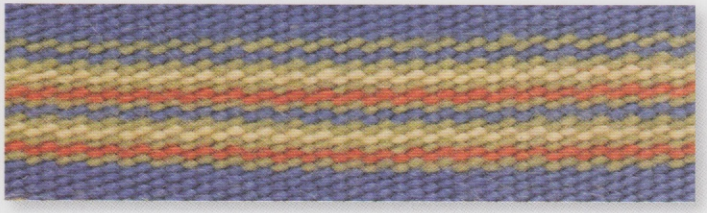
Even though the weaving is very similar to the previous example, here the blue is repeated on each side of the orange-and-blue pick-and-pick rows so that the pattern seems to float on a ground of blue.



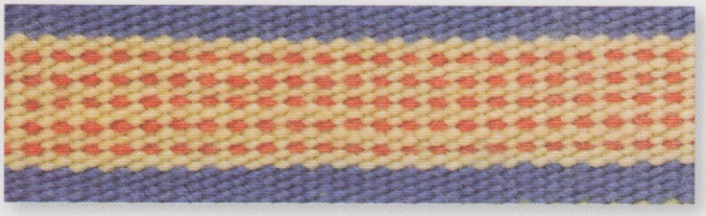
For this example, 5 rows of white, 5 rows of orange, and 5 rows of white each alternate with 1 row of blue. Because blue is always woven in the same shed, solid blue vertical lines are created across the width of the cloth.



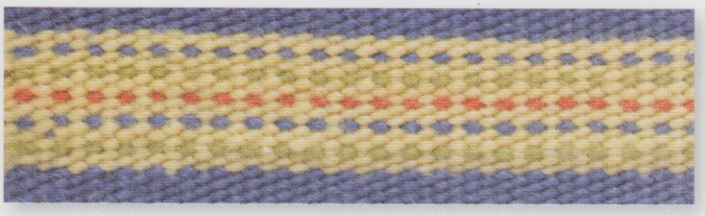
Alternating 2 rows of green and 2 rows of orange produces narrow wavy stripes.



A lively striped design is formed when 2 rows each of several colors are alternated.



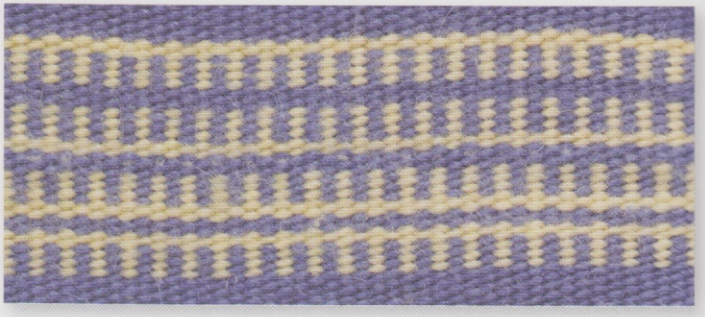
Stacks of spots result when 3 rows of white are followed by a single pick of orange.



Here, 3 rows of white are followed by single picks of different colors to produce a light and airy look.

A little border motif can be made by framing pick-and-pick rows of alternating blue and white with "daisy chains" made by weaving 2 rows of white, a single row of green, followed by 2 more rows of white.

In this example, green-and-white sections are offset by blue and red "daisy chains." The predominately green stripes are similar, but different.



Blue-and-white pick-and-pick stripes form vertical lines that contrast with horizontal rows of solid colors. This is a fun way to use just two colors to make an interesting border.