

# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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*Question:* What is the "lease" in weaving? And why is it important? Is it always necessary to keep lease sticks in the warp at the back of the loom while weaving? And if so, why?

*Answer:* The "lease" is a cross in the warp — one thread up and one down — that makes the tabby shed. The word, though, is used chiefly for the cross made between pegs on the warping board or drum when making a warp "chain".

The lease in a warp-chain is extremely important as it keeps the warp-ends in correct order for drawing in and beaming. A very short warp can be managed without a lease, but even this is apt to be a messy business. A long warp-chain of many ends would be almost impossible to manage without a lease.

In sectional warping, however, the lease is not required. The warp-ends come through the guide in regular order and a paster across the ends of each bout of warp holds the ends in this order for threading.

After the loom is threaded the lease is, of course, in the heddles.

No, it is not necessary to keep lease sticks in the warp at the back of the loom during weaving. They are useful only if the warp is in very bad condition — full of twists and loose ends. In that case the better procedure is to re-beam the warp. Not a difficult process. Lease sticks at the back of the loom appear to be a form of superstition — quite odd and interesting. I have seen a woman go into

a near-spasm because the lease-sticks fell out when she let off the tension of her warp too suddenly. She told me in all seriousness that she could not weave without them, and that to put them in again she would have to pick up the warp-threads one by one with her fingers. She was quite shocked when shown that all she had to do to put back the sticks was to open the tabby sheds with the treadles. And still more shocked when assured that the lease sticks might be left out without any bad results.

I have heard people insist that sectional warping was all wrong because no lease was put in the warp while warping, and that it is impossible to weave correctly on a warp not made with a lease. Of course this is the purest nonsense, and simply goes to show how we tend to follow ancient patterns of behavior by rote, without troubling to reason or to try experiments with new ways of doing things. There is nothing sacred or holy about the lease, no matter what the old-time weavers may say. Putting in lease sticks at the back of the loom is a gesture, like keeping the fingers crossed to avert disaster, and has just about as much practical value. Put them in, by all means, if you like the effect — and don't object to having to push them back every time you wind up your woven web. But don't admit that you think they have any effect on the weaving!

However, do not make a chained warp without a lease or you will have regrets. Incidentally, a lease can be used in sectional warping if desired, but it is entirely unnecessary.