

An alternate view of preparing a weave.

By Owen Dare

Like most aspects of rod building, the art of weaving thread onto fishing rods has been carried out using methods that have been tried and tested for many years past. And why shouldn't they be? I mean "*why fix something that ain't broke*"?

Well often the answer is because whilst the "time honoured" methods may indeed work very well, the very inventors of those methods may well have come up with something different had they had the technological advances in materials and communications we enjoy today.

Like many others, I became fascinated with thread art early in my rod building career. And like many others, I bought the books and videos of guys like Dale Clemens and Doc Ski to find out how the guys considered to be the best do it. After all, why not save a heap of learning and go straight to the proven methods?

So I sat down with graph paper and pencil and I counted off all those squares onto a left list. Then I dragged out my trusty masking tape and started sticking my threads down one by one, just like in the video. Then I went back and regathered all the ones that fell out and I tried to stick them back down again. Invariably more fell out as soon as I started weaving and with each rise in blood pressure I started to realise that perhaps there was a better way.

Of course there was! Unlike books and videos, the internet is updated every day, so in short time I had a weaving loom or "jig" into which I could load all the threads.

Again, because the books all said "this is how it's done", I laid down tape on the butt end of the weave and loaded the threads into the loom on the tip end (I weave left to right). But still I was struggling to accept that trying to get threads stuck down neatly on a piece of tape was the only way this could be done. And of course it's NOT!

The following is the method I now use for setting up and carrying out a weave. I'm not suggesting it is the "right way", the "best way" or anything other than it's "my way". Indeed there are potential pitfalls that must be catered for.

Much has been written about how to develop a "left list" or weave pattern and the pros and cons of both methods. Likewise there are excellent tutorials on packing and tightening and other aspects of the actual weaving process. I will only briefly enter these arenas.

This tutorial is simply about how to arrange your threads on the rod.

Having developed your weave pattern or left list either by hand or with the aid of software, you are faced with getting all those threads mounted on the blank ready for weaving. But where to start...?

Well firstly you need to work out the approximate finished dimension of your weave. If you are using weave development software like PicToWeave then this part is easy as it's given to you.

Mark the length of your weave onto your blank in the position you wish it to fill. If this is to be between a pair of split grips, you need to take care to centre it well.

Next you need to determine the "centre" of your weave. Beware! The mathematical centre of your weave may not be the point you want to be on the zero degrees axis of your blank. Quite often, you actually want a visual index point such as an eye or some other important feature to be on the zero axis. Consider for example if you were doing a weave of a rooster fish or some other species with a very long dorsal fin. Let's say for instance your weave pattern for this fish is 80 threads high. If you simply centre thread number 40 over the zero axis of the blank, the majority of the body of the fish will be well off to one side of the blank and will look "off centre". It is well worth the effort to print out your weave pattern and wrap it around the blank. Then mark the spot where it looks properly centred on the rod. You can then work out what thread number this relates to and adjust your jigs so that this thread number is on the zero axis.

I like to do my weaving in my wrapping lathe. I find the friction of the motor provides enough resistance so that I can rotate it to any point and it stays put.

So set your rod up and mark the zero axis right along the area where your weave will go.

Then lay your jigs out on the blank and lightly secure them with cable ties or "zip" ties. If you are working over a grip, place several layers of tape down first to prevent damage from the ties.

Leave enough room either side of the position of the weave to work in, but don't put them too far apart as it means you have to lean way out to see what number thread you are working with. Too close together and the threads will be sharply angled from their place on the blank to the point where they are stored in the jig. This will mean they will need constant re-aligning during the weave. About 4-5 inches (100-125mm)

either side of your weave is sufficient, but if you can comfortably space them further it helps by reducing thread angle. Sit yourself down and see if you can move a thread from one side to the other without having to lean out either side. Trust me, you'll be sick of doing that after a couple of thousand times!

Take a piece of thread and run it all the way from your designated "centre" thread one jig to the corresponding thread location on the other jig. You can now use this thread to align both your jigs. Now move each jig so that the thread is both directly above and parallel to your centre line on the blank.

Now it's time to start laying down your threads. If it's a simple one layer affair then it's pretty basic, but if it's got lots of layers, where do you begin? When I was writing PicToWeave I had to ponder this same question and I decided to use whichever colour thread that had the highest thread count as the bottom layer and work up from there. Of course you can have more than one colour on a single layer and indeed the same colour can end up on more than one layer. You could easily argue that the progression should be such that the threads needed first (or most) should be the top layer and the ones needed last (or least) on the bottom. That'd be fine too! At the end of the day, every one of those threads ends up being on top so pick a system and go with it.

It's at this point where I deviate from what has become "accepted practice". I can't come to terms with trying to stick the threads on the left of my weave onto tape to secure them. Instead, I run my threads all the way from one jig to the other. (*figure 1*)



When I have all my threads in place for that layer, I place a highly visible and contrasting thread into the designated "centre" slot (in addition to the existing weave thread". This thread will allow me to align the threads with the rod as I snug them down.

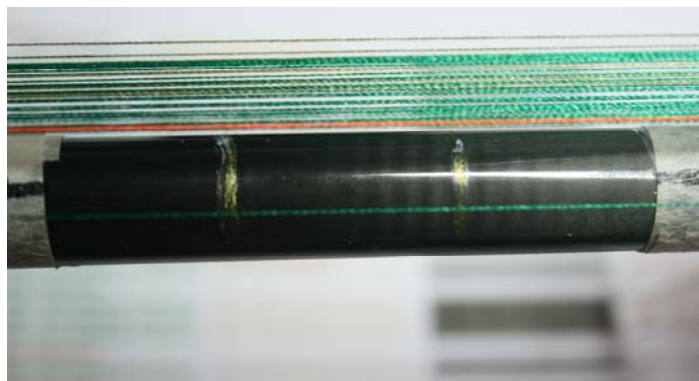
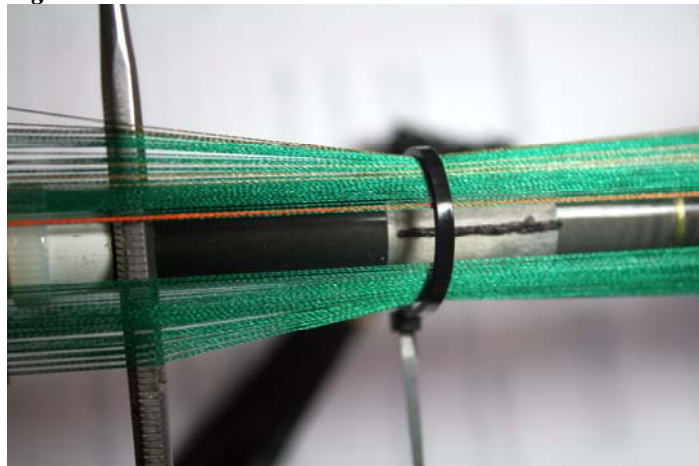


Figure 2 shows this "marker" thread as well as the marks where my weave will begin and finish.

Once I have all my threads in place I encircle all the threads and the blank with another "zip" tie. These should be as small as possible for the job so that are flexible.

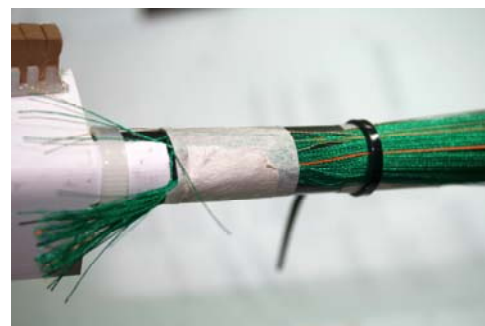
By gently snugging down the zip tie, all the threads will be gathered together as you reduce the diameter of the tie. Be careful not to allow them to overlap or bunch up. I find that by inserting my packing tool under the threads on the left before I begin (*figure 3*) and gently lifting it in a vertical motion, the flat surface ensures that the threads stay in order as I tighten the tie.

Figure 3:

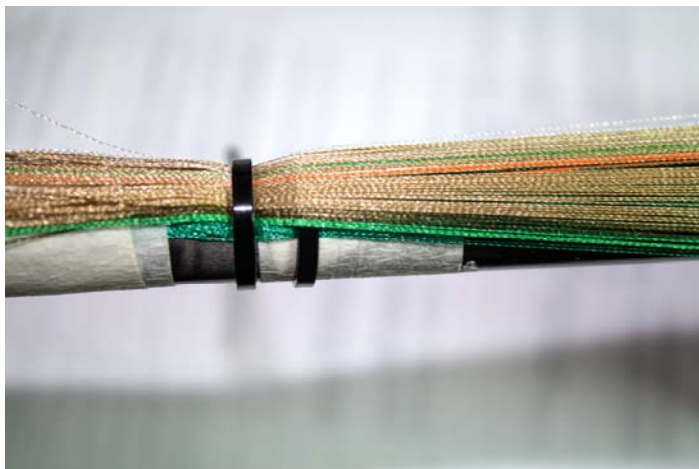


Ensure that as you get down to the blank, that your "marker" thread is aligned with the centre mark on the blank.

Once it is tightly snugged down (*figure4*), trim the threads from the left jig and tape them down, but ensure you leave enough length to allow you to grasp it when it comes time to tighten the weave!



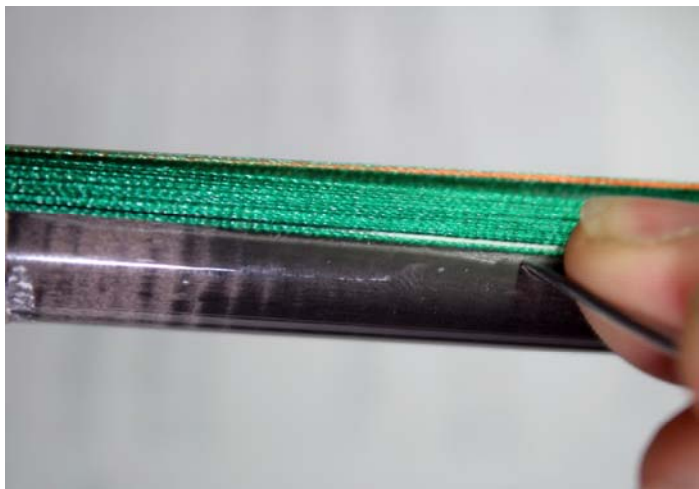
If the weave is a multi layer pattern, then this process is repeated for each subsequent layer. Please note that in addition to using a “marker” thread for the centre, it can also be used to ensure that significant points are aligned in each layer. For example, if a layer has a gap between some threads such as may occur in a weave of a scene, then it may be of benefit to use a marker thread on the outer edges of each section.



This image shows the second layer all tightened down and properly aligned with the first layer of threads.

Once all the layers are in place, the marker threads can be gently removed, leaving just the threads required for the weave.

I also find it useful at this point to scribe a line down each side of the blank in line with the outer extremities for the weave. This will allow me to make sure my weave is not getting wider as I go, which is a natural tendency due to the way the jigs angle the threads outwards.



Now we are ready to begin wrapping!

Before I begin to put the wrap thread on, I like to do a little preparation for the finish. I take a long length of the same thread I will be wrapping with and secure it on the bottom of the blank just as I would when setting up a trim band.

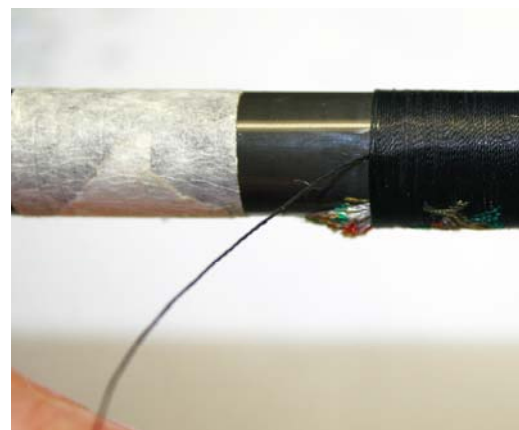


I then begin wrapping over my design threads and continue up to the mark I had previously made where my weave would begin.

Once my weave is complete, I tighten and pack the threads on the right (tip end) and whip over them.



Then when I have tightened and packed from the left (butt end) I take my previously prepared whipping thread and finish off.



Weaving is often seen as a “black art” In reality the actual process is a simple mechanical act that can be accomplished by anyone with a modicum of dexterity and attention to detail. If you’ve been frustrated by the methods employed in the past, then perhaps this might enthrall you to get back on the horse. Happy weaving!