



Photos by Joe Coca unless otherwise noted

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# Me and my shadows: Windows and Shadows Shawl

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## STRUCTURE

Shadow weave.

## EQUIPMENT

8-shaft or 4-shaft loom,  
30" weaving width;  
10-dent reed; 3 shuttles,  
8 bobbins; 44 plastic  
miniblinds 1" × 30"  
each per shawl (1 pkg)  
or smooth poster-  
board strips.

## YARNS

**Warp:** 18/2 merino wool (5,040 yd/lb, Superfine Merino, JaggerSpun), White, 1,274 yd; Black 749 yd; Shale, 588 yd; 5/2 pearl cotton (2,100 yd/lb) or similar, any color, 224 yd.

**Weft:** 18/2 merino wool, White, 1,055 yd; Emerald, Sage, Plum, Elderberry, Peacock, Jade, 190 yd each (19 yd per stripe); 5/2 pearl cotton, any color, 210 yd.

## WARP LENGTH

405 ends 7 yd long for two shawls (allows 10" for take-up, 32" for loom waste); add 3 yd for each additional shawl.

## SETTS

**Warp:** 20 epi (2/dent in a 10-dent reed with 80 empty dents; see Figures 1–3).

**Weft:** 20 ppi (41 wool, 4 cotton alternating with 1" spacers).

## DIMENSIONS

**Width in the reed:** 28<sup>7</sup>/<sub>10</sub>". Woven length (measured under tension on the loom): 90" each shawl (allow 16" between shawls for fringe).

**Finished sizes after washing:** two shawls 20" × 72" each with 5" fringe at each end.

*Shadow weave has played a major role* in my weaving life for over twenty years. These "Windows and Shadows" shawls take advantage of shadow weave's alternating colors and optical effects.

In 1981, I had been weaving for about five years and was looking for something new to weave on my 4-shaft loom. Someone suggested I try shadow weave. I had no idea that this suggestion would lead me to take the first step in an exploration that continues to this day. Just about every project I designed for the next several years ended up being in shadow weave. Every time I thought about a project, it somehow had to be in shadow weave—from scarves and jackets to placemats and napkins—in colors both high and low in contrast.

I did finally move on to other weaves, but every once in a while I just have to design something new in shadow weave. The Windows and Shadows shawls are the end result of a problem that I had been thinking about for some time: How to combine lightness and warmth with an interplay of color in something fun to wear. With the shawls, I consider the problem solved!

## CREATING THE SPACES

The spaces in the warp direction are created by skipping dents (10 dents between sections of 41 ends of merino). Two ends of pearl cotton are threaded at the edges of each merino stripe. These cotton ends keep the wool ends secure until after wet finishing, which fulls the merino so it stays in its position permanently. In the weft direction, 1" wide miniblind slats are used as spacers. Two picks of pearl cotton secure the weft on each side of each weft stripe. The spacers are carefully pulled out after the fabric is cut from the loom; the pearl cotton is not removed until after wet finishing.

### *Creating windows in shadow weave*

Spacing the warp and weft in shadow weave provides some delightful surprises. In the spaces the alternating colors create ikat-like patterning. Merino wool (and a smooth waste yarn that is removed later) make the "windows" crisp and permanent—as if by magic.

- 1 Wind the warp following Figure 1. These directions are for warping back to front. If you warp front to back, sley the reed as described in Step 3 (the position of the empty dents is shown in Figure 1), but be sure to use stiff paper or lots of sticks between the layers on the warp beam to keep the spaces between warp stripes from affecting warp tension.
- 2 For back-to-front warping, sley the raddle alternating 14 and 15 epi and centering for 28" weaving width (the warp can be beamed with even distribution rather than being spaced as it will be in the reed). Thread the shafts following the draft in Figure 2 or 3. (These shawls are woven using the 8-shaft draft in Figure 2, but the 4-shaft draft produces a very similar design.)

**3** Centering for a weaving width of 28<sup>7</sup>/<sub>10</sub> ", sley the 10-dent reed 2/dent (sley the last end of each stripe singly) and skip 10 dents between stripes following Figure 2 or 3.

**4** Begin the first shawl by inserting 7 spacers into sheds formed by alternating treadles 6-2-6-2-6-2-6 or 3-1-3-1-3-1-3 (this section will be used for fringe). Then weave 2 picks of smooth waste yarn (5/2 pearl cotton or similar). Carry this weft up the selvages leaving loops as in Photo b to make its eventual removal easier.

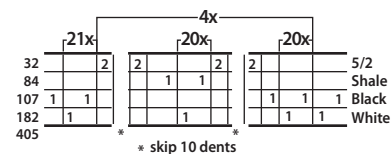
**5** With a shuttle of White merino and a shuttle of Emerald merino, weave the first 41-pick stripe following Figure 2 or 3 and then end off the Emerald yarn. Weave 2 picks of 5/2 cotton. Insert a spacer using treadle 6. Weave 2 more picks 5/2 cotton and set this shuttle aside. For the next 41 picks, alternate White and Sage for the second stripe in Figure 2 or 3. End the Sage, weave 2 picks of 5/2 cotton, and insert a spacer. Your weaving should measure about 6" at this point.

**6** Weave four more stripes as in Step 5, using Plum, Elderberry, Peacock, and Jade. Then repeat from the beginning of Step 5 four more times (five in all), using the colors in the order Emerald, Sage, Plum, Elderberry, Peacock, and Jade (90" total length). End with 6 more spacers and a few picks of 5/2 cotton.

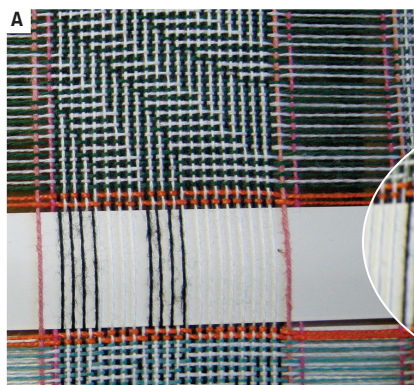
**7** Weave the second shawl in the same way as the first. If you have other colors of merino, you can change or vary the stripe colors. The black/white/gray warp will work well with any color and invites experimentation.

**8** Remove the two shawls from the loom and gently roll them up as you pull them from the cloth beam. Take the roll to a flat surface and carefully remove the spacers and the 5/2 cotton from the fringe allowance. Continue unrolling and removing the spacers. Do not remove any of the 5/2 cotton protecting the stripes.

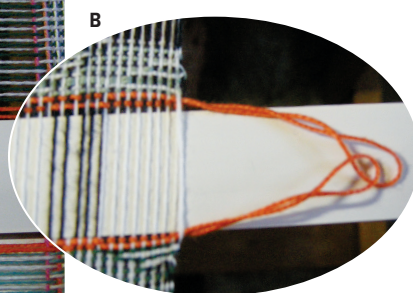
**1. WARP COLOR ORDER**



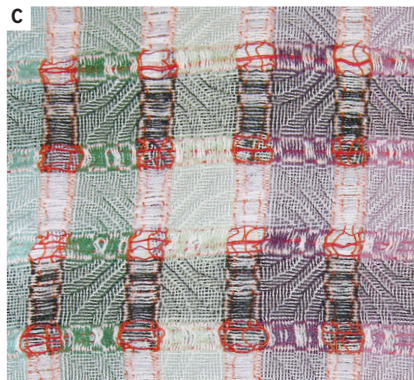
When you get to the 5/2 cotton between the two shawls, cut the shawls apart and continue removing the spacers. Make a twisted fringe at the ends of both shawls (I divided each warp stripe into 4 fringes); secure fringes with an overhand knot. Take care to avoid including any of the 5/2 cotton warp threads in the twisted fringe.



**A.** Miniblinds are used as spacers; a smooth yarn (5/2 pearl cotton or similar) keeps the merino stripes in place until after wet-finishing.

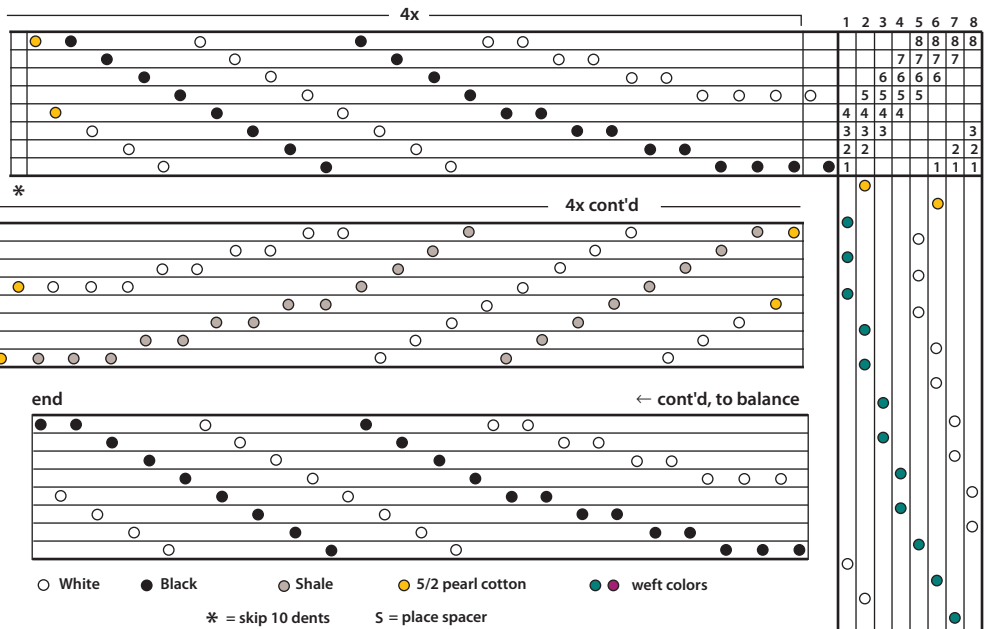


**B.** Leaving large loops of the 5/2 cotton at the selvages helps make it easy to remove after wet-finishing.

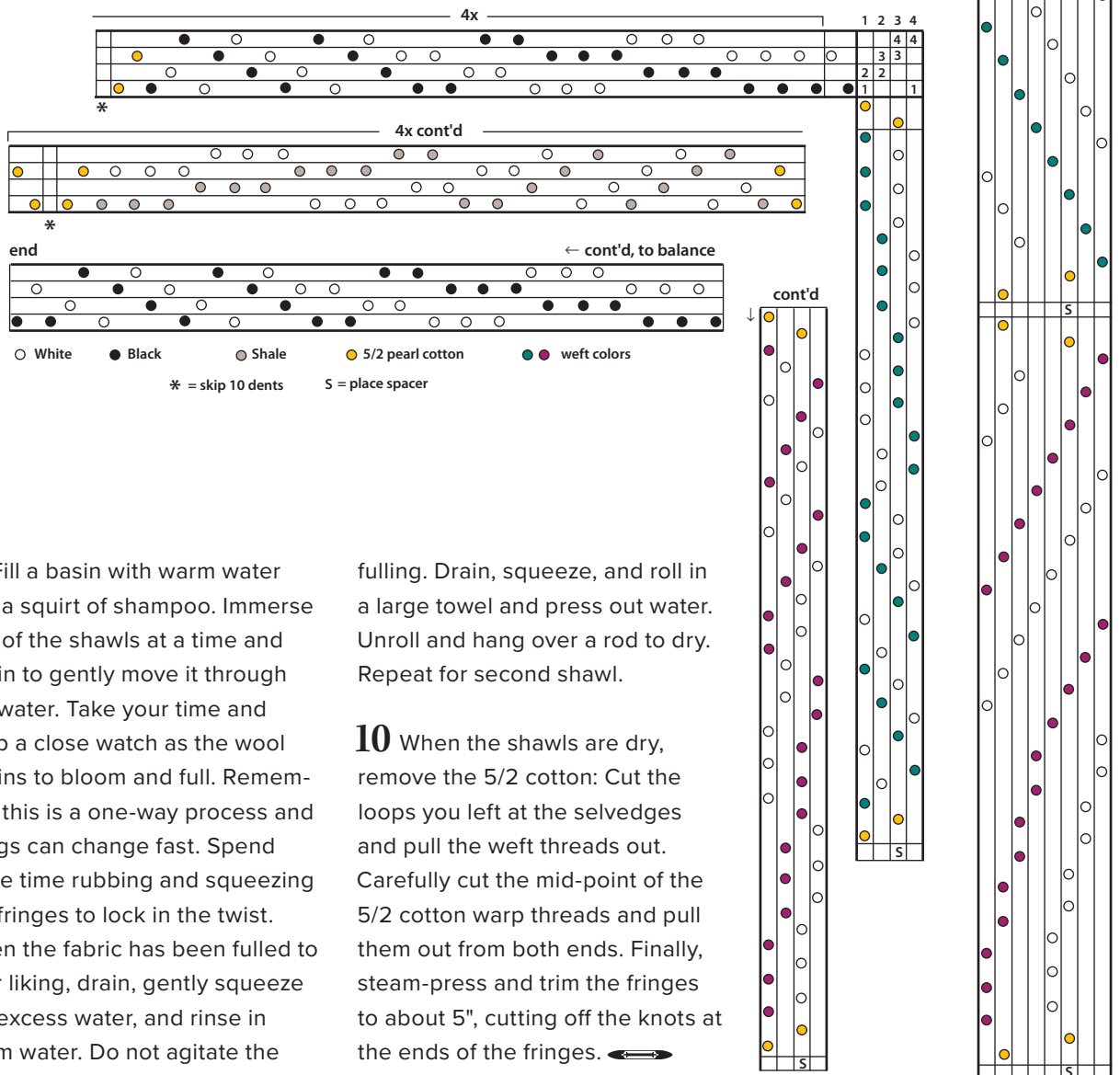


**C-D.** The fulled merino yarns are locked securely in place, and the smooth 5/2 cotton (orange in the photos) can now be removed.

## 2. 8-SHAFT DRAFT



## 3. 4-SHAFT DRAFT



**9** Fill a basin with warm water and a squirt of shampoo. Immerse one of the shawls at a time and begin to gently move it through the water. Take your time and keep a close watch as the wool begins to bloom and full. Remember, this is a one-way process and things can change fast. Spend some time rubbing and squeezing the fringes to lock in the twist. When the fabric has been full to your liking, drain, gently squeeze out excess water, and rinse in warm water. Do not agitate the shawl as it will cause further

fulling. Drain, squeeze, and roll in a large towel and press out water. Unroll and hang over a rod to dry. Repeat for second shawl.

**10** When the shawls are dry, remove the 5/2 cotton: Cut the loops you left at the selvages and pull the weft threads out. Carefully cut the mid-point of the 5/2 cotton warp threads and pull them out from both ends. Finally, steam-press and trim the fringes to about 5", cutting off the knots at the ends of the fringes. ⇄