

# Beginning Alternating Pick Up for Inkle

Heather Heroldt

## I. Introduction

Welcome to beginning alternating pick up for the inkle loom. I will guide you through the process of basic alternating pick up weaving, starting with the design process and ending with simple finishing techniques. My instructions rely heavily on the book [Inkle](#) by Evelyn Neher, and I use her nomenclature in the draft. I highly recommend this book. Like Ms. Neher, I plan to help you create a sampler of basic pick up shapes which you can refer to later in designing your own patterns. To that end, I will also not concern myself with color theory, as that will be part of your personal creative process later. This lesson will help you nail down the technique, so you can design your own work with ease. My directions and illustrations apply to the table style of inkle loom, but we can also address your custom or floor loom in class. I will not go into the history of inkle weaving here, pick up technique or otherwise, but here are a few excellent resources that I highly recommend, both for historical research and technique:

[Inkle](#), Evelyn Neher. Self-published, Guilford, Connecticut, 1974.

[Inkle Weaving](#), Helene Bress. Flower Valley Press, Rockville, Maryland, 1990.

Originally published by Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975.

[Byways in Handweaving](#), Mary Atwater. New York, 1954.

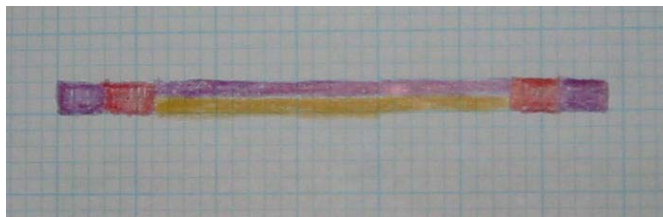
[www.inkleweaving.com](http://www.inkleweaving.com) Tracy DeGarmo's inkle weaving website.

[www.weavershand.com](http://www.weavershand.com) Incredible resource on a variety of narrow-wares, including inkle weaving. Decent bibliography for inkle weaving as well, for those interested in further research.

[www.heatherspages.net](http://www.heatherspages.net) My website, with these directions and a photo gallery of directions, among other things. You can contact me through the site, as well.

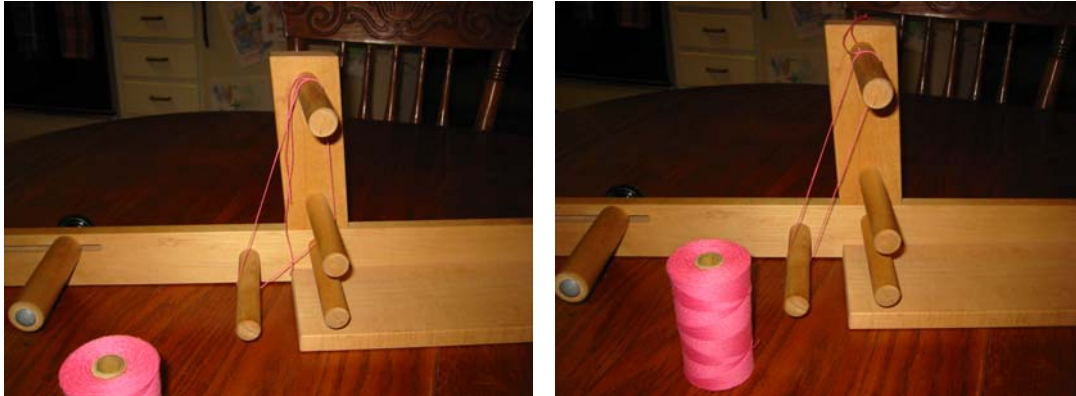
## II. The Draft

In alternating pick up, as opposed to speckled pick up, the draft is based on a pattern of alternating horizontal stripes or bars. Patterns are "picked up" in opposite colors on these stripes. What that means for you is a lot of color changing when you wind on the warp. For the purposes of this class, I suggest that you design a two-color draft of horizontal stripes 22 threads wide, with a third color to offset the border design. If you wish to repeat one of the stripe colors outside the third color border, that's fine. All three colors should contrast well.



### III. Warping the Loom and Preparing to Weave

Before we start warping the loom, I want to talk about your heddles. You may already have many heddles tied based on the standard illustrated by the photo on the left below. I wanted to mention, however, that I have had great success in pick up weaving by tying my heddles as illustrated to the right. The slightly shorter heddle gives the warp being picked up a bit more “pop,” adding a little ease to the mechanics of pick up. Either way is fine, but you may want to try the shorter heddles in the future.



Warp the loom as you typically would, following the draft you have designed. Have your dark row be the heddle row. Try to be vigilant about tension! When finished with the warp, go ahead and fill up your shuttle with your border color. Try distributing some of the bulk of the weft on your shuttle as shown in the picture below. When you’re ready go ahead and weave a few shots on the warp to set the spacing. Now we’re ready to start our samplers.



### IV. The Pick Up Technique

To “pick up” threads, turn the loom so you are facing it as if you were weaving. If you have not already done so, make sure you throw a couple plain shots to set the warp. Set down your shuttle. Insert the index finger of each hand into the shed from either side. This leaves your thumbs free to count and manipulate the threads at the top of the shed. Patterns are read row by row, starting from the bottom and working up, and read or counted left to right. Start by “holding” most of the threads in your right hand, or simply encircling them with your right thumb and index finger. As you count the threads, pass them to your left hand. If the pattern calls for you to “pick up” thread 5, count over 5

threads from the left at the point where your alternating rows start on the upper shed, then pull them apart, creating a gap between threads 5 and 6. The thread from the lower part of the shed that you see between the 2 you separated is the thread you are picking up, and you then raise it to become part of the upper shed, passing it to your left hand with the others. Continue to pick up the threads as indicated, until all the threads are passed to the left hand. The shuttle is then passed through this “custom” shed you have created. Change sheds, and beat. Remove the shuttle without making a shot to start picking up on the next row, or lay in a shot, change sheds and beat, depending on what the pattern indicates. Start with the darker threads raised unless otherwise noted. An “O” indicates a plain-weave shot. It may be useful to have a bookmark or straight-edge handy to read the patterns. Let’s get started, trust me, it works.





**Singles - 2**

		11	
o		10 12	
o		9 13	
o		8 14	
o		7 15	
o		6 16	
o		5 17	
o	4		18
o		5 17	
o		6 16	
o		7 15	
o		8 14	
o		9 13	
o		10 12	
o		11	



**Singles - 3**

	6 8 10 12 14 16	
o	7 9 11 13 15	
o	8 10 12 14	
o	9 11 13	
o	10 12	
o	11	
o	10 12	
o	9 11 13	
o	8 10 12 14	
o	7 9 11 13 15	
o	6 8 10 12 14 16	







**Doubles – 3**

0  
0  
0  
0  
0  
0  
0  
0  
0  
0

11 12  
9 10 13 14  
11 12  
5 6 17 18  
3 4 7 8 15 16 19 20  
5 6 17 18  
11 12  
9 10 13 14  
11 12







**Doubles – 5**

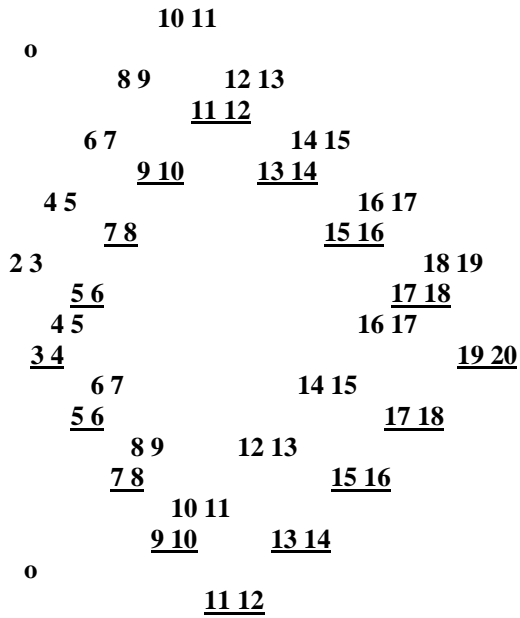
Notice how the dark pick-up takes the place of a plain weave shot at the point where the two patterns meet.

o		4 5
o		2 3 6 7
o		4 5 8 9
o		2 3 6 7 10 11
o		4 5 8 9 12 13
o		6 7 10 11 14 15
o		8 9 12 13 16 17
o		10 11 14 15 18 19
o		12 13 16 17 20 21
o		14 15 18 19
o		16 17 20 21
o		<u>7 8</u>
o		18 19
o		<u>5 6</u> <u>9 10</u>
o		<u>3 4</u> <u>7 8</u> <u>11 12</u>
o		<u>5 6</u> <u>9 10</u> <u>13 14</u>
o		<u>7 8</u> <u>11 12</u> <u>15 16</u>
o		<u>9 10</u> <u>13 14</u> <u>17 18</u>
o		<u>11 12</u> <u>15 16</u> <u>19 20</u>
o		<u>13 14</u> <u>17 18</u> <u>21 22</u>
o		<u>15 16</u> <u>19 20</u>
o		<u>17 18</u> <u>21 22</u>
o		<u>19 20</u>



**Doubles – variation**

Here we combine dark and light pick up in closer proximity.



Doubles – variation 2

o  
 11 12  
 9 10 13 14  
11 12  
 7 8 15 16  
9 10 13 14  
 5 6 11 12 17 18  
7 8 15 16  
 3 4 9 10 13 14 19 20  
5 6 11 12 17 18  
 1 2 7 8 15 16 21 22  
3 4 9 10 13 14 19 20  
 11 12

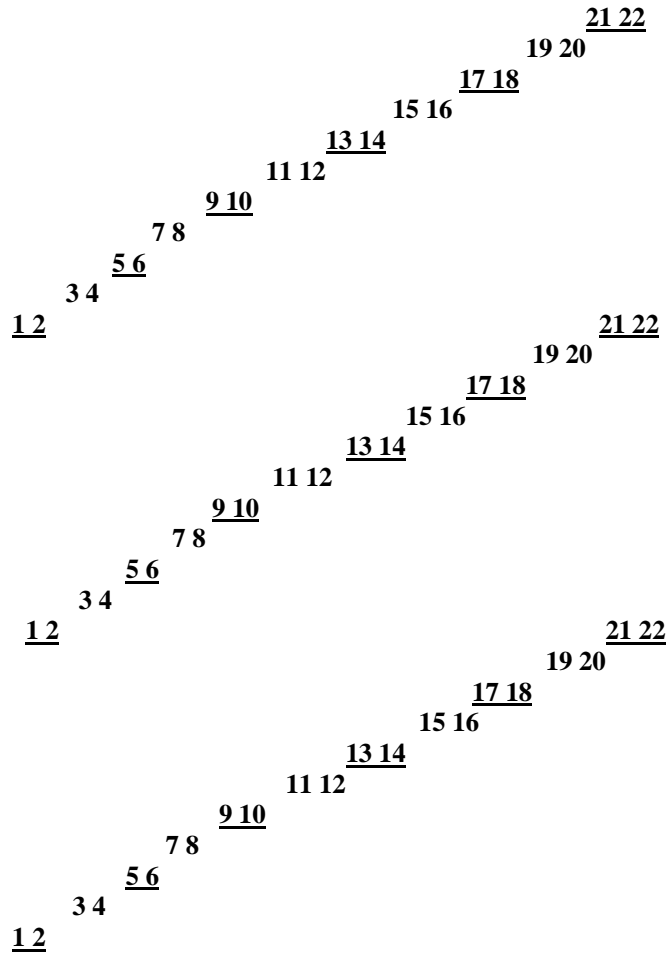
o  
 9 10 13 14  
11 12  
 7 8 15 16  
9 10 13 14  
 5 6 11 12 17 18  
7 8 15 16  
 3 4 9 10 13 14 19 20  
5 6 11 12 17 18  
 1 2 7 8 15 16 21 22  
3 4 9 10 13 14 19 20  
 1 2 7 8 15 16 21 22  
5 6 11 12 17 18  
 3 4 9 10 13 14 19 20  
7 8 15 16  
 5 6 11 12 17 18  
9 10 13 14  
 7 8 15 16  
11 12  
 9 10 13 14

o  
 11 12  
 1 2 3 4 7 8 9 10 13 14 15 16 19 20 21 22  
 3 4 5 6 9 10 11 12 13 14 17 18 19 20  
 5 6 7 8 11 12 15 16 17 18  
 7 8 9 10 13 14 15 16  
11 12  
 9 10 13 14

o  
 11 12



Doubles – variation 3



Doubles – variation 4

1 2  
   3 4 5 6  
1 2 3 4 7 8 9 10  
 1 2 5 6 11 12 13 14  
   3 4 9 10 15 16  
   5 6 11 12 17 18  
1 2 3 4 7 8 13 14 19 20  
   3 4 9 10 15 16 21 22  
   5 6 11 12 17 18  
 1 2 7 8 13 14 19 20  
   3 4 9 10 15 16 21 22  
   5 6 11 12 17 18  
1 2 3 4 7 8 13 14 19 20  
   3 4 9 10 15 16 21 22  
   5 6 11 12 17 18  
 1 2 7 8 13 14 19 20  
   3 4 9 10 15 16 21 22  
   5 6 11 12 17 18  
   7 8 13 14 19 20  
   9 10 15 16 21 22  
           11 12 17 18  
           13 14 19 20  
           15 16 21 22  
           17 18  
           19 20  
           21 22



Doubles – variation 5

15 16  
 1 2            9 10            13 14            17 18  
       3 4        7 8            11 12                            19 20  
           5 6  
1 2            9 10                            15 16  
       3 4        7 8                            13 14            17 18  
           5 6  
                   11 12                            19 20  
                           15 16  
 1 2            9 10            13 14            17 18  
       3 4        7 8            11 12                            19 20  
           5 6  
1 2            9 10                            15 16  
       3 4        7 8                            13 14            17 18  
           5 6  
                   11 12                            19 20



Doubles – variation 6

                  15 16  
       5 6                            13 14            17 18  
3 4    7 8                            15 16  
       5 6  
 o                            15 16  
       5 6                            13 14            17 18  
 3 4    7 8                            15 16  
       5 6  
 o



**Triples**

0 10 11 12  
0 7 8 9 13 14 15  
0 4 5 6 16 17 18  
0 1 2 3 19 20 21  
0 10 11 12  
0 7 8 9 13 14 15  
0 4 5 6 16 17 18  
0 1 2 3 19 20 21  
0 4 5 6 16 17 18  
0 7 8 9 13 14 15  
0 10 11 12  
0 1 2 3 19 20 21  
0 4 5 6 16 17 18  
0 7 8 9 13 14 15  
0 10 11 12

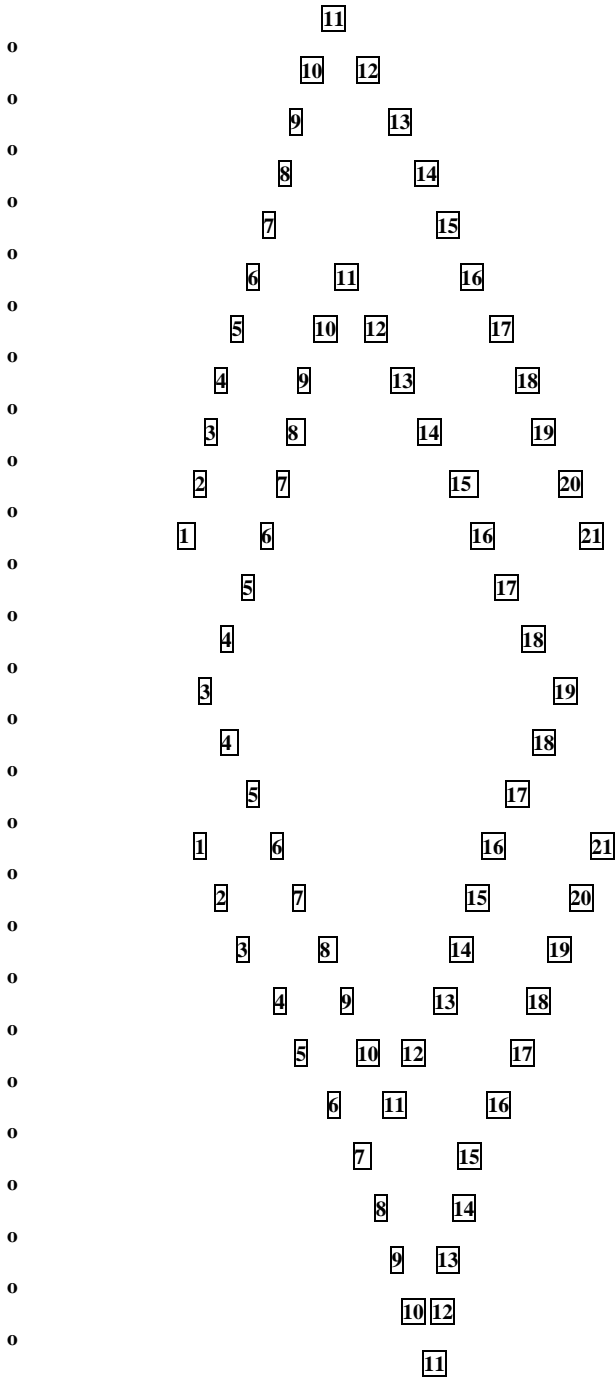




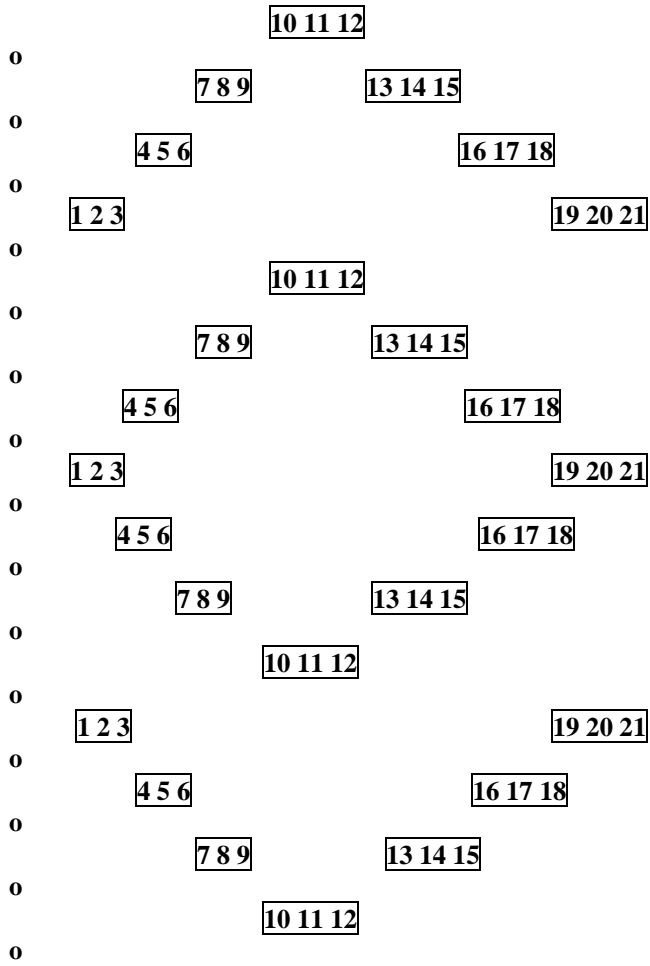


## Reversible technique

If you examine the back of the weaving you have done so far, you can see gaps in the weave where you have picked up threads from the bottom shed. You can also weave reversible, by dropping a thread from the upper shed every time you pick up one from the bottom. For example, if the draft calls for you to pick up thread 5, count over to the 5<sup>th</sup> thread, push it down to the lower shed, and bring up the 5<sup>th</sup> thread from the bottom. Lay in a shot, change sheds and beat to see the effect. I notate reversible weave in the draft by drawing a square around the number.



Reversible Triples



## Finishes

How you finish the ends will depend a lot on how you plan to use it. If you'll be using it for a trim, I recommend using a sewing machine to run over the ends with a zigzag stitch several times before trimming off the cut ends. You can try working some overhand stitches by hand around a cut edge, too, if you like, but the weaving may tend to pull out if you're not thorough about sewing into the fibers rather than between warp strands.

There is also a huge range of fringes that you can work into the ends. If that will suit your purpose, look at some macramé materials for creative ideas on that. In the meantime here are three quick ones. I usually leave my weft ends long, and just work them into the fringes with the warps. If you plan on working fringes, line up the two inkle ends together and trim off the loose warps so they are the same length on both ends before you begin.

- a. **Simple knots** – Knot the ends into simple overhand knots, right up against the finished end of the weaving. After working the knot, pull sharply on each warp strand in the knot to really tighten it down evenly.
- b. **Braided fringe** – Work the warp ends into braids and knot at the ends. You can try counting out the warp threads to make sure all the braids are the same width.



- c. **Twisted fringe** – A third option that looks nice is a twisted fringe. To make the twists that make up a twisted fringe, begin by separating out two equal bundles of threads for twisting together. You can either eyeball it, or actually count up the number of threads and divide it out so that each bundle is exactly the same. Twist up one bundle of threads between your thumb and forefinger. I usually twist left to right, but it doesn't matter which direction you go. Now, tuck the twisted bundle between two other fingers while keeping it twisted, to free up your thumb and forefinger to twist the next bundle. I usually use my other hand to help with the twisting. Now, **twist the second bundle in the same direction as the first.** It might take a try or two to figure out how to hang on to everything. Once done, knot the twisted bundles together at the ends, keeping tension on the twists. I knot onto the twisted parts, not the ends past where my twist ends. Once the knot is in place, let go, and the strands will counter-twist back on each other. Pretty nifty. If you don't want to do this by hand, lots of companies make little machines that do it, try Lacis for a hand-cranked one, or Leclerc for a little electric model. Twist up the rest of the warps, trying to line up your knots as evenly as you can. Next time, try twists with 3 or even four bundles

of threads. It's a challenge to hang on to everything, but well worth the result. Try adding beads or gewgaws, too.



## I. Some Last Thoughts

Once you have the mechanics of basic pick-up weaving down, experiment with other fibers and techniques. Silk is fun, it squeaks when you change sheds, it can be a little unnerving. Try Halcyon Yarn Company, online at [www.halcyonyarn.com](http://www.halcyonyarn.com), for silk fibers in various weights. They have “mini-cones” available that consist of a few hundred yards so you don't have to buy a pound at a time while you try it out. There's also a 60/2 art-silk I get on eBay from Punita's East India Company, \$10 a box plus shipping, for making gorgeous ribbons and trims. Art-silk is 35% silk and 65% viscous rayon. Some novelty yarns and fuzzy or handspun fibers can be used as well. Play with tension to see if that helps.